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AMY CARR.













"AMY CARR, THREE YEARS OLD, SHE'S YOURS."

Frontispiece, (see page 70.)



# AMY CARR;

OR,

## THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

BY

CAROLINE CHEESBRO.

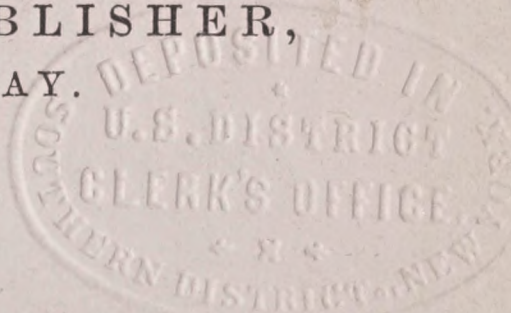


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208



# AMY CARR.

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## I.

“**H**ERE, Amy!”

Amy Carr was standing in the kitchen door, looking thoughtful, and not happy, when she heard this call. At the sound of her name she started forward, looked around her, and then walked across the long grass to the gate.

There stood Stephen Rider, with his basket on his arm, eager and impatient as usual; he was in a hurry to get to the Station, for Stephen was a peddler, and sold fruits on the cars, as well as at the Station, and along the streets of Hamilton.

“Here’s one for you, Amy. I picked it out on purpose,” he said, as he laid on the gatepost the finest peach of the basket. “Did you ever see such a beauty? It’s a rare-ripe.”

Before she had time even to thank him, he



was off, running down the street. Amy stood looking after him a minute, and then turned toward the house again.

"I wish I could peddle peaches! I wish I could do anything besides quarrel with Maria," she said. "Ten shillings a day, and sometimes more, and that is sixty a week! It's thirty dollars a month he earns. He isn't as tall as I am. No wonder father says little Stephen will be a rich man yet. He never seems to be tired, though he looks so all the time. It's because he isn't thinking of himself, but of business. I shouldn't be tired either, if I had anything to do that would give me a good start."

All at once, Amy's face brightened; her heart beat faster, and as she stepped into the house she looked confident and determined.

Maria entered the kitchen at the same moment with her arms full of ribbon. Amy looked at her, and wondered what this might mean.

Maria wondered too, for she saw the peach in Amy's hand, and *such* a peach! where could it have come from!

"Where did you get so much?" she asked.



"Stephen gave it to me."

"Well, I wouldn't want to take a boy's living out of his hands in that way," said Maria, proudly.

Amy gave the peach an angry toss through the window.

"That's all I care for it," said she. "He gave it to me. I was going to tell him that I didn't want it, but"—

"Afraid of hurting his feelings, I suppose," said Maria, with a sneer.

"I suppose so," answered Amy. She spoke as if she did not care for Maria's words ; but she did care. When she came in just now, she was thinking she would give the peach to her, and she might carry it to school : but, as usual, they had quarreled.

And Maria, it seemed, was not thinking of school ; for already the fingers of the clock were close upon figure IX. of the dial, and in a minute more the church bell would strike, and here was she with her hands full of work, thread, needle and thimble ready, and it was clear that she intended to sit down there



in the kitchen, and occupy herself with them.

And now the clock struck—at the same moment the church bell began to ring.

“There!” said Maria, looking up as if she had been waiting for that sound, “there! it’s nine o’clock. You’ll be late for one.”

“When are *you* going?” asked Amy.

“Not at all,” answered Maria. “*I’m* going to earn my living. I think grandpa’ has kept me long enough. So you’ll have to go without me.”

“Oh, Maria!” exclaimed Amy. And now there was no anger in her face, or in her voice, only hope and longing. Why could not she and Maria talk like sisters about this? She came nearer as she spoke. “It’s just what I’ve been thinking,” said she. “I wished I could peddle peaches, like Stephen, or do anything. But I suppose there’s work for girls as well as boys.”

Maria looked at Amy as much surprised as if she had supposed that Amy never had a thought of earning her own living.



"Did you hear us talking last night?" she asked.

"No. Who?"

"Grandpa' and me."

"No ; I wish I had. I wish you had let me talk with you, if it was about doing anything. Work, I mean."

Maria looked as if she still doubted whether Amy was sincere in saying this.

"You didn't? You say you didn't hear us?"

"Not one word. An't you going to tell me what you talked about?"

Maria was ready.

"Grandpa' was saying how hard the times were, and I told him I meant to earn my living. See here. This is a job Mrs. Downing gave me. It's a cape for Hatty. I've got all these six yards of ribbon to put about this little thing! But I'll get it on, you may depend. And what I'm going to *do* is, get a trade of Miss Butler. I'm going to be a milliner. I expect I'll have a shop of my own, some day. But I shall have to go and live with her. And if I get any time for my own, it will be Satur-



day nights and Sundays. And you may think how often I'll have Saturday nights, for one of the girls told me that often and often they worked till 12 o'clock, hurrying to get bonnets done for folks to wear o' Sundays. But they have all Sundays to rest themselves in, the girls do, anyhow."

"Oh, what hard work, Maria!"

"I don't care. Besides, what can you expect? If it *is* hard work, it's pleasant, and I always liked to fuss up pretty things."

"Yes," said Amy, thoughtfully, "I know."

"What'll *you* do," asked Maria, "if you don't keep on at school?"

"Won't they take me at Miss Butler's too?"

"Why, you can't tell green from blue! And you couldn't see to pick a cherry, if you tried."

"I know it."

"You'd make a pretty milliner, then, wouldn't you?"

"Besides, what would become of father?" asked Amy.

"To be sure." Maria's voice softened. But



she was not quite ready yet to drop the subject of Amy's deficiencies. "You could never tie a knot either, or make a decent bow."

"I know it," replied Amy again. "And father needs us more and more, I think."

"He said *you* must keep on at school."

"*Did he!*" exclaimed Amy, and her eyes filled with tears—she looked away.

"Yes," said Maria, growing more and more amiable. "You soft little thing, what are you crying for? He said he thought you liked your book better than anything else."

"Not better than him, any way," said Amy, with an effort. "So I'm going to stop. Tomorrow there's a new quarter begins. He has taken care of me so long, now I must begin to think about him! I, as well as you. And more than you—for he has always been a father to me, Maria."

So each of the girls had told her secret thought; and had told it with a gentleness and kindness not common in their speech with one another.

## II.

“WELL, now, where are you going?” asked Maria, for on looking up from her work she saw Amy tying her bonnet on.

“I won’t be gone long,” answered Amy, and she walked quickly out of the kitchen, for she was not ready to answer any further questions yet.

She had hardly stepped upon the walk when she met a gipsy woman.

“Are the young ladies in?” she asked. “I’ve got something good to tell ’em.”

At that Amy went running back, and called to Maria. And there was something in her voice that made Maria drop her work. Besides, *she* had caught the woman’s last words which were spoken with a high shrill voice. She was eager to hear the rest.

“What’s wanting?” she asked, as she came out into the porch that was so beautifully shaded



by the noble woodbine, and the overhanging willow and elm trees.

"There's a pretty lady!" said the gipsey. "Give me your palm a minute and I'll read you the good luck I can see in your eyes."

"Oh, yes, I know all about that," answered Maria. "You want money—that's what you want."

The woman's face looked very grave at that, as if she were surprised that any one should suspect her sincerity.

"For a sixpence," she said, "I'll tell you what's hidden and secret. And save you from an accident and an enemy; come, now!"

"An accident and an enemy!" exclaimed Maria, with spirit. "Either of 'em might cost me a good deal more than sixpence." And she went into the house on a run.

Presently, back she came, and gave the money to the fortune-teller; exposing her palm at the same time, that the old woman might study it.

"Get your money!" said Maria to Amy. "Be quick! You've got to have your fortune told, too. You want to know just as much as



I do. See what your trade is going to be. And if you will be rich."

"I haven't got a sixpence," said Amy, "not one."

"There's Stephen! call him! Steph!" She herself called, and called in a loud voice, as if she were very eager he should hear, in spite of what she had said just now. But to accept the present of a peach from Stephen was one thing, and to borrow money of him was quite another, it seemed.

Stephen came into the yard at the call, and Maria said :

"Stephen, Amy wants to borrow sixpence of you."

"No, I don't either," said Amy, quickly. But she did, and Stephen knew it, saw it in her face, and heard it in her voice—and he drew from his pocket a dozen sixpences. "And I'll give you your fortune, too, my brave man," said the gipsy, quickly, when she saw the money.

"Will you?" he asked, but he walked backward a few steps ; then he stood to hear what she would foretell for the two girls.



And first was Maria's turn.

"Now give me a good one!" said she, laughing; but at heart she was very much in earnest, as eager to hear nothing but good from the woman as if those cunning eyes had really power to look into the secret future, which God alone has in His keeping.

The fortune-teller whispered in her ear. What she promised was riches, ease, and triumph over an evil enemy, who professed to be a friend. She should have a carriage to ride in, rings for her fingers, and fine dress a queen could not despise. Besides, the accident that threatened her should prove to be the greatest piece of good luck that could possibly befall her!

Maria was perfectly satisfied. She could not have asked for more.

She went off smiling, and said to Amy:

"Now's your time. I wish you good luck!" She could afford to wish it, such a noble share of this world's goods was laid up in store for herself!

Amy seemed to hesitate. But the woman



did not mean to lose that silver sixpenny bit, so she took the girl's hand and pretended to study it, as she had Maria's, with a very serious face. At last, after a long silence that made Amy tremble, her face brightened, as if her eyes had pierced through a cloud to the sun, and she whispered to Amy.

"Pooh!" exclaimed she. One might have supposed that she did not believe a word the woman spoke. But still, though Amy spoke with contempt and unbelief, she smiled.

"It will be a good time to start out and look for work," said she to Maria. "But if such wonderful things are going to happen to us, I don't see the use of bothering about a trade. We might just as well sit down and wait."

"That's what I think, too," answered Maria. But still it was far from her intention to "sit down and wait."

"Come, my fine young gentleman!" said the gipsy to Stephen, in a coaxing voice. "Now's your turn. Cross my palm with a silver sixpence, and then you'll see what good things are in store for you."



"No you don't!" cried Stephen, laughing, and stepping back a pace or two. "I'm up to a trick or two myself. I can draw a crowd about me any day. Maybe I'll tell you *your* fortune, if you are anxious."

The woman looked at him as if in doubt whether to be angry or no. Then she laughed and shook her head scornfully, and said :

"I'll tell you you can't do anything with a miser. And I'll tell you, besides, there's them that starves though their purse is never empty."

"Miser!" repeated Stephen, with contempt. "There's a shilling for you to pay for your compliment." And he tossed the coin at her.

"Well, show me your hand!" said the woman, at the same time stooping to pick up the coin.

"Wait till I've lost my legs and arms, then I'll come and ask you what my fortune's going to be." And at that Stephen ran whistling out of the yard.

"Dirty beggar!" cried the woman, looking

angrily after him. But she kept his shilling in her hand.

"Well, no matter," said Maria, speaking more kindly than her habit was. She felt so grateful to the fortune-teller for the good things she had foretold !

"My dear," whined the old woman, "have you got a crust of bread for a poor, tired traveller ?" While she spoke, she sat down on the step. So, after all, she was only a beggar, and a shabby one at that !

Maria looked at Amy, but Amy's back was turned. She was already going across the grass. Maria called to her ; but Amy said, looking around one instant, and not longer, "I won't be long away." And so when she came to the gate she passed through it, and went towards the Main street.

That vexed Maria ; and she was vexed still more when she ran into the kitchen and saw her work was lying there on the table hardly begun. She had lost all this time !



## III.

AMY, for her part, had been very uneasy since Stephen went off in that way, as if he despised the fortune-teller. She felt it was the very thing *she* should have done. Stephen had set her an example. And, besides, she owed him a sixpence, and did not own one in the world. That was not a pleasant thought. She had before now learned how much easier it is to contract a debt than to pay one.

To show that she believed as little as Stephen in this fortune-telling, though she really believed more, she walked into the street.

She had, besides, a plan in her mind. It had lodged itself there an hour ago, and not easily could it be got out again.

In the basement of the bookstore was a room, through whose windows she had often looked.

At a table, in the middle of this room, a



woman sat at work. Ever since she could remember, Amy had seen the woman in that place at work. It was always the same woman, and she was always alone.

It was Amy's plan to go into the basement and talk with this person. True, the woman was a perfect stranger to her ; but Amy had looked at her so often that her face did not seem strange, and she felt a kind of confidence that if she obtained no more than good advice here, she should at least get that.

As she came near the place she walked less rapidly. She began to fear and doubt. Still, she compelled herself to go on, until she turned the corner and went, walking still more slowly, down the lane, to the rear of that high building where school-books were printed, bound, and sold.

On a platform, in the back-yard, stood a wagon, loaded with sacks, that were filled with rags, and these were being weighed. The rags were bought here for a paper-mill.

When Amy saw this wagon she stopped short, and wondered how she should get past



it, or round it. But she did not wonder long. Bent on her errand, she made her way into the basement, through the dark passage, to the room in front. And, behold! the door was locked! Two or three times she knocked, and then she spoke, and called, but there came no answer and no sound whatever from within.

But coming to the street again, she saw a woman walking just before her, who, she felt very sure, must be the person she had seen at work here in this room so long.

So she followed after her, and in a few moments must have overtaken her, had not this lady suddenly turned a corner and disappeared from her sight.

## IV.

HURRYING on, so fearful that she had now lost the track, Amy saw, to her surprise, that this lane, as she had supposed it, led immediately to the rear of the church.

There she stood, looking down the passage, in great dismay, wondering what next to do. But while she stood and wondered, a voice said to her,

“Won’t you come in with me?”

The speaker was a young lady. She was dressed in mourning. Her face was very pale, and it was also very kind and gentle. Sorrow had taught her that all mortal beings have a *right* to look to one another for tenderness, love, and compassion. Her voice was a voice that led our Amy along as a mother’s hand might have done. As they entered the chapel—for chapel the room was called, and it was used for week-day worship by the people who



gathered on Sundays in the adjoining church—the congregation was singing that devout old hymn beginning with—

“Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land.”

The lady who had become Amy's guide entered the first vacant slip, and beckoned this little stranger to sit down beside her. Walking on tip-toe, afraid that if she breathed naturally she might disturb the people, Amy obeyed.

It was not a large company that had gathered together on this occasion; but they had assembled in the Lord's name, and it was evident that they believed He was, according to his promise, in their midst. By and by, while the hymn was being sung, Amy had the courage to look around her. Then she saw not one familiar face, but many a kindly one. Young, old, and middle-aged were here, and all for worship, all for guidance, all for help. “Pilgrims of a barren land,” asking “bread from heaven,” and the “healing waters.”

How still, and calm, and safe it seemed in



that place of prayer ! Amy had fluttered in as a leaf might be carried along by the wind, and how good it was to be there she felt through soul and body.

The singing ended, and a chapter was then read, that wonderful chapter beginning with the blessed, comforting words, "Let not your hearts be troubled;" the words our Saviour addressed to the little company of loving friends whose hearts were filled with sorrow and despair, because He was about to leave them.

After this chapter, a psalm, the twenty-fifth, was read in a low, sweet voice that must surely have found its way into every heart : "*Show me thy ways, O Lord ! teach me thy paths. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*"

Amy thought of the fortune-teller as she listened, and her face grew red. "SHOW ME THY WAYS, O LORD !"

This was asking what one's fortune should be in another way than she and Maria had asked. It was asking it of Him "in whose



hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways," instead of a miserable beggar who cared more for a sixpence, any day, than she ever did for truth.

After the Scripture reading, an old man whose hair was white as snow, rose up in his place and addressed the young people present. He told them of his foolish, simple youth ; of his restless, ambitious, toiling manhood ; of the warnings God had given him from time to time, through his family, and his business, and his health ; touching him here and there, *trying* him, as if to show him what manner of man he was ; taking away his children, taking away his property, taking away his health ; blessing him at unexpected times, and in ways he did not look for : and all in vain, until now, in his old age, having drank of all the worldly fountains and proved that they could never satisfy the soul's thirst, he stood up to entreat those who were just setting out on the journey of life to choose first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and *he* could testify that all other needed things should surely be added to them.



Then the little company joined in singing the hymn, which the old man, with a broken voice' recited—

“People of the living God!

I have sought the world around:

Paths of sin and sorrow trod,

Peace and comfort nowhere found.

Now to you my spirit turns,

Turns, a fugitive unblest;

Brethren! where your altar burns,

Oh receive me into rest.

“Lonely I no longer roam,

Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;

Where you dwell shall be my home,

Where you die shall be my grave;

Mine the God whom you adore,

Your Redeemer shall be mine;

Earth can fill my soul no more,

Every idol I resign.”

Prayers followed. Prayers for persons in danger—for persons tempted—for souls that seemed to be lost in sin, in wayward folly. Prayers for persons in great perplexity. And there was one who prayed, prayed at last,



prayed in secret, drawn into confession of her weakness and her sins, who had never prayed before. That one was Amy Carr, saying from her heart,

“Show me thy ways, O Lord !”

As she walked out of the chapel with the people who had stopped there on the way to their places of business to worship God and ask his blessing, the lady who had drawn Amy in there by her friendly voice, said :

“Will you come again to pray with us, my child ?”

Amy looked up into her face, and answered,  
“I’d like to. Do you want me ?”

For she had never felt so happy, or so safe, in all her life as now, when she looked on the lady’s lovely face, and heard that invitation.

“Surely I do. And God wants you ; that is better. Come to-morrow, dear.”

“Is it every morning ?”

“Yes. All the year round.”

“I’ll come.”

When Amy’s lips closed on that promise it

was the sincere desire and purpose of her heart to come again to-morrow.

But, as she walked out from the alley to the street again, who should she meet but Maria Twist!



## V.

MARIA looked twice before she could believe that this was actually Amy walking with these sober-looking people from the prayer-meeting. For *she* knew what sacred services were held in the chapel every morning.

She had on her arm the cape she had been trimming for Mrs. Downing's little girl.

"Well, if I ever!" she exclaimed, as Amy stopped short, looking not a little bewildered, for she knew that Maria would scold, and would laugh at her, which was a great deal worse. "That's what you ran off, and left me alone with the fortune-teller for! keeping me from my work ever so long! If you hadn't anything else to do, you might better have stayed yourself."

"I *had* something to do," said Amy, as confused, now that she walked by the lady's side no longer, as if being detected coming from a



prayer-meeting were something to be ashamed of. Forgetting, that having asked the great and mighty Lord to lead her, she had now no reason to fear any mortal's ridicule ; ignorant, too, that Jesus, who hears every cry for help that goes up from the hearts of those who are trying to trust his love and his promises, that HE, on the instant of such prayer, sends his Holy Spirit to give help and strength to the praying, forgetting all this, she said, "*I had* something to do. I was hurrying along after a woman to ask her about something, some work, and she went in there, down the alley to that room, or whatever you call it. So I went too. But after all I lost sight of her. I should have caught up with her, I guess, if you hadn't come along and stopped me !"

Poor Amy ! if she had told the truth, she had told it like a coward ! And to think what a Helper waited, and would have given her victory, if she had only been a little brave, and owned how happy she had been in there among those worshippers, in "that room, or whatever you call it !"



“Well, what are you going to do now?” asked Maria, who was thinking too much of what the Fortune Teller had told her, to be very cross or long angry, this morning.

“I’m going back to see if I can find that woman, where she used to be, or if anybody can tell me where she is.”

So the girls separated on the side-walk. They turned their steps in opposite directions, just as their hearts were turned. And they whose eyes behold our spirits clearly as we look upon the persons of each other, saw that this day a blessing and a curse was set before these young souls ; and that one with longing eyes, but folded hands, beheld the blessing. Would those hands ever unclasp, reach after, and obtain it ?”

## VI.

AMY was disappointed when she went back to the basement.

The door was still locked ; the curtains still undrawn. She met a boy, however, in the back yard, who had come from the printing-office with a pail ; he was going to the pump. Him she asked about the lady who used to work in that room down there.

"She's sick," was the short answer.

"An't she ever coming back again?"

"I expect so. Of course."

"Where does she live, sir?"

"Don't know, ma'am." Having made this answer, he ran on with his pail to the pump. Amy followed him a step or two, then she stood still, doubting what next to do.

Seeing that she stood there, and looked so disappointed, when he came back the boy



asked "Why? What do you want of Miss Dix?"

"I want to ask her something."

"Well," said the boy, moving on again, but speaking kindly, "You keep a looking, and may be you'll see her in there afore long. I heard she was getting well. Mr. Miles couldn't have waited much longer if she hadn't got better. There's piles and piles of work to do."

These words encouraged Amy. She determined she would see Miss Dix the very day she came back to the basement. She would come every morning to find out whether the curtains were yet drawn aside and the door unlocked. When the poor woman found how much work there was to do, very likely she would be glad of help.

When Amy went home she met Stephen. He was loitering near the gate. She wished she had not met him. She wished she might not see that boy again till she had earned a sixpence, and could pay him what she owed.

"Well," said he, opening the gate for her,



"you've got your fortune told. And now you're going to take it easy, I expect."

"Why didn't you have yours told, then?" asked Amy.

"'Cause I don't believe in 'em."

"No more do I," said Amy.

"I can find out my fortune fast enough, I guess. I know what I'm going to do. I've sold two dollars' worth of chestnuts to-day. Clear profit, I mean."

"What are you going to do?" asked Amy.

Stephen was ready to tell her, though he did not tell his plans to every one. He thought Amy would wish him well.

"I'm going to have a fruit-stall, by the Park, in a year or two," said he. "I'll have money enough ahead to hire one by that time. Then I'll have a shop like the rest of 'em, first you know."

"I expect you will," replied Amy. She did not smile. "It sounds true," she said. "Truer than the old woman's talk."

"Yes," said Stephen, well pleased by her confidence. "And I'm going to have it lit



with gas and all the other fine fixings. Gas shows off goods better than oil."

"And you'll be having nice new clothes then for your mother and yourself, and a good house for her to live in,—a great big three-story brick building, won't you?"

"No, indeed! but I'll have a neat, little cottage, with a yard and a garden—you may bet on that." The boy's eyes flashed.

"Did ever a fortune-teller tell you so?"

"No!" answered Stephen, with scorn.

"Then how did you ever find it out? I know it will come true. But how did you see it? When *I* try to look ahead I can't see a thing, and I want to."

"When you get to doing something, that's what'll open your eyes," said Stephen, encouragingly.

"I'm going to try to do something pretty soon. I'll pay you that sixpence, Stephen, out of my first earnings. I don't want to ask father for it."

"Pooh!" What's a sixpence?"

"I wouldn't a borrowed it if it hadn't been

for Maria. I hate to owe anything. I can't sleep for thinking of it till I get it paid. It's been so often and often."

"What's that about, Maria?" asked a voice; and there stood Maria Twist close behind them!

For a minute there was no answer. Then said Amy:

"The fortune-telling, and that sixpence. I'm sorry I borrowed it."

"They've have been telling her how wicked she was, I expect," said Maria, laughing. "Amy went off and left me here alone with the old woman; and where do you think she went to?"

Stephen looked from one of the girls to the other. His face had a very puzzled expression. He could not venture to guess.

"She's been to a prayer-meeting to get her fortune told over again."

The boy laughed as if there were something very funny in that.

"How did *you* ever get in there?" he asked, laughing yet. He expected Amy would laugh



too. When he saw that she was very much confused instead, and apparently on the point of breaking into tears, he, too, looked grave.

"I walked in," said she.

"Did you get your fortune told?"

"Was you ever in such a place?" asked Amy in turn.

"Sometimes." Nobody expected to hear that answer from him.

Amy's face brightened; her heart took courage; she looked at Maria.

"Well," said she: "Do they tell fortunes in such places? You know as well as I."

"Sometimes," he said again, speaking in a way the girls had not heard him speak before.

"I heard mine told in a meeting once."

They gazed at him with wonder.

"What was it?" they asked with one breath.

"That's telling. It's my secret. But I'm going to see if it comes out right. And I know it will, beforehand. I guess I'll go, before you get it out of me."

"Just tell me one thing," cried Maria.

"Who was it told your fortune? You know who told ours."

"Well," said Stephen, who had started off on a run—and he stood still just long enough to make this answer, and no longer—"it wasn't a man, and it wasn't a woman. I'll tell you, girls, that much. Don't you ask any more."

"It was the Bible," said Amy to Maria.

"You goose!" answered Maria; "don't you see he's fooling you?"

But Amy continued saying to herself,

"It was the Bible...I should think it would be full of fortune-telling. True, too. Truer than the old woman...'*Show me thy paths, O Lord!*'"



## VII.

“STEPHEN, did you ever really go to the prayer-meeting?” asked Amy, the first time she saw the lad again. Her mind was so full of the subject, that the question seemed to ask itself.

“No,” he answered; “what should I be there for?”

“Why, I thought,” said Amy, so astonished at his answer that she hardly knew what to say, “I thought you said so. To be sure you did.”

“No, I didn’t. I never was in such a place. I only took your part against Maria. But, then, I’ve been to preachings, of course, with mother. Don’t you stop for what Maria says, if you want to go. It’s my opinion we don’t make anything by giving up just because somebody *says* give up.”

“I mean to go again.”

"I hope you'll hear your fortune told," said he; and Stephen laughed a pleasant laugh, and a kindly expression, really beautiful to see, spread over his homely features and his freckled face.

"It wasn't for that," she answered quickly. "I mean to go, because I promised to. I told a lady I'd come. And it was real pleasure there. Don't you want to go, Stephen? I should think, if you had your fortune told once, and it's coming out so true, you'd want to go again. Perhaps there's something else you ought to know.

"Oh, I don't mind. Folks fortunes are pretty much as they choose. You're going, are you, spite of Maria?" he asked again.

"Yes, I am."

"That's right. I wouldn't break a promise. If I promised you out and out, I'd go, if it cost me ever so much. So I an't agoing to promise, They'd think I'd come to peddle fruit, I guess."

"No—they wouldn't. They'd think you came to get a blessing."

"Is that what you're going for, Amy?"



"It's what they all go for. Yes."

"To *get* something. Well, now, what if I can get all I want outside?"

"You can't. There's an old gentleman said so. He told how he'd been seeking all his life, everywhere, and had found a good many things, but there wasn't anything he found good for anything till he found religion."

When she had said this, Amy was astonished at herself. She had said what was wholly true, but not until this moment had she been able to take hold of the truth, and look at it, and understand that it was religion, the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, that she wanted, and that if she found that pearl of price in her heart, it was *all* she needed in this life to ask; for with that wisdom would come the riches of knowledge, yes! durable riches, and peace that passeth understanding.

"Did he say so?" asked Stephen, thoughtfully.

"Yes, Stephen, he did." You go ask him if he didn't!"

"Well, now, that would be fun! I expect

I'll go up and down the streets, asking every one I meet for an old gentleman that found religion! Guess I'll catch him pretty quick."

"There's one place where you'd find him. I know he's always there."

"If I promised, I'd go," was Stephen's answer. He knew that the place she spoke of was the prayer-meeting.



## VIII.

THE next morning, Amy found abundant work to do in the house. Maria kept her busy. There was the kitchen to be attended to, breakfast to get, and dishes to be washed, and an errand down street, besides ; for Maria had brought home another piece of sewing from Mrs. Downing's, and Amy, of course, must help her through with it. For Maria was earning money now, and great was the need of money in that house.

Never did Amy move so quickly, or work so fast, as this morning, and when at last she went running through the street in the direction of the chapel, she met the people coming from the meeting, and heard the town clock strike the hour that also told her the time had come for the close of morning service.

Next day the same thing happened ; and the next. Amy's disappointment brought her back

to the house in no very gentle mood ; and the first irritating word Maria spoke brought on a storm.

What was the end of all this hateful talk ? Amy was not only ready to say she would never go to another morning meeting, but was almost ready to deny that she had ever been to one.

A few days later, Stephen said to Amy :

“ I didn’t see you out this morning. I looked about to see you.”

She guessed in a moment what he meant ; but she said,

“ Where ?”

“ You know. At that meeting.”

“ No ; you didn’t. I know that well enough.” But though she had said to herself she would never go again, she did not now tell Stephen that such was her intention.

“ Haven’t you ever been but that one time ?” asked he.

“ No.”

“ Why ?”

“ At first I couldn’t, and then I wouldn’t.”

“ After you promised ?”



"I know it."

"That an't the way I keep my promises."

"Have you been there, Stephen?"

"Yes."

"You said you couldn't."

"I found I could. I was looking round there, and somebody asked me in. So I went."

"What did you think?"

"I thought I'd go again. So I did. It didn't take much time." Out spoke the brave boy. No jeer of any person could prevent his doing what he thought was right. "And I'll tell you one thing. I made as much as if I hadn't spent the time. And I've seen that old gentleman besides. He's a friend of mine. His name is Mr. Spingler."

Amy resolved that if she lived till the next morning, she would redeem her promise ; would find a way of getting to that meeting. The resolution that had seemed to die out of her was all alive again. It was not easy to keep back the tears that started to her eyes as suddenly the pleasant scene of worship came again so clear before them. Wretched and lonely

she had felt in these past days ; it was not true that work was all she wanted ; she had never worked so much as since that day of the prayer-meeting.

“ Now my spirit to you turns,  
Turns, a fugitive unblest !  
*Brethren !* where your altar burns,  
Oh, receive me into rest.”

That was what she wanted. Friends who were the Lord's friends.

What ! you say. A child ! Amy was fourteen years old. How old was Samuel when he was called to serve the Lord ?

But it seemed as if Maria understood what Amy's purpose was when the next morning came.

Never were so many things to do, it appeared, as that very morning. And the time for the meeting drew near, and work was not finished yet.

At last came Amy with her shawl on her arm, and her bonnet on her head, there was not another minute to be lost.

“ Where now ?” asked Maria, looking up from



her work, speaking very quickly. Her displeasure was all ready.

Amy paused a second, then the courageous answer came, but it was spoken hardly above her breath :

"I'm going to the prayer-meeting now, Maria," she said. "I'll come back and help you all day. But now I'm going."

"You an't; you're going to stay and help me earn your bread!" exclaimed Maria, angrily, starting up. She would have hindered Amy's going in any way she could; but Amy was gone!

I can tell you nothing here that would give to you an idea of that delightful morning meeting. I cannot give God's sunlight, or the blessed flowers to a man who is blind. You must yourself come into such an assembly of worshippers if you would know what thoughts were in Amy's heart when a voice read, in that still place, and all the people sang :

"O Jesus, full of truth and grace,  
More full of grace than I of sin,  
Yet once again I seek thy face,  
Open thine arms and take me in!

And freely my backslidings heal,  
And love thy faithless servant still!"

Or, if you would know how her whole soul  
bowed low to Jesus while another read :

"No word in song more sweet than this;  
No name is heard more full of bliss:  
No thought brings sweeter comfort nigh;  
Than Jesus, Son of God most High.

"Jesus! the hope of souls forlorn!  
How good to them for sin that mourn!  
To them that seek Thee, O how kind?  
But what art Thou to them that find.

"No tongue of mortals can express,  
No letters write its blessedness:  
Alone who hath Thee in his heart  
Knows, love of Jesus! what Thou art."



## IX.

“**C**ASTING *all your care on Him, for He careth for you.*”

This was the word Amy took with her from the blessed place.

And as she went down the street she said, “Lord, lead me.”

She was making all the haste she might, when, passing by the alley that led into the rear of the bookstore, she thought of Miss Dix, and the next instant she was running down the lane.

She must hurry for Maria’s sake ; but, if it were possible for her to take home good news, to say that she also had found employment, and should be paid wages for her work, would not that sweeten Maria’s heart a little, and obtain for Amy a welcome !”

And, even as she ran, behold, a hand drew

aside one of the basement window-curtains, and Amy saw a face, a woman's face, a face that was very pale, as if from recent sickness. She saw this at a glance, and she ran on the faster.

The door at which she knocked, that told her also that now at last she should have an answer to her question. Can you guess how her heart beat when she knocked, and a voice said, "Come in," and she obeyed?

Miss Dix had evidently been at work bringing the room to order, after her long absence. She had a broom in her hand, but had only just begun to sweep, and there she stood looking toward the door.

When she saw merely a young girl enter, a poorly-clad and anxious-looking child, she seemed surprised, but she said nothing. She stood with her broom in her hand, waiting to learn what was wanting.

Amy must speak.

"I came here last week," she said, "but the door was locked, and I've looked every day since almost, to see if you hadn't come."



"What did you want of *me*?" asked Miss Dix.

"I thought, perhaps, you'd give me something to do—some work. Couldn't I learn to do it?"

"I don't know but you could," said Miss Dix, but her voice did not sound very encouraging.

"Let me sweep the room for you," said Amy, coming nearer; "I can sweep clean. You have been sick. I'm strong."

"Well, you may, child, thank you."

So Miss Dix sat down and waited there at the table, doing nothing, while Amy swept the floor.

For, in truth, the effort she had made to walk here this morning had tried her very much.

"I want to do something for a living," said Amy, when the room was swept, and she came and stood by the table. She looked so serious, and spoke so earnestly, that Miss Dix answered as she might have spoken to a person much older than Amy.

"This looks like easy work, you think. One may get a fever doing it, though. That is what I got. You can get as tired doing this work as breaking stones on the road, if you are so foolish as to go beyond your strength. Don't you go to school?"

"I have been ; but I don't mean to go any more. It's time I was supporting myself. I was going to be a teacher, but, since father had his hurt, I've thought I must be doing something for him, and not be an expense any longer."

The woman looked at Amy as if she would read her very heart. After a few minutes, she said,

"There's a good deal of work to do here. More than enough for one person. Not enough for two women, though. Mr. Miles will employ you, if I need an assistant, I dare say. If you are handy. And I have no doubt you will learn, if you are quite in earnest. But, are you to be depended on? If I employ you, I must be sure of you. Do your friends know where you are?"

"No. I told Maria I should find some work



as soon as I possibly could. She knows I'm looking."

"Take this sheet of paper, then, and this folder. And now watch me. Do exactly as I do. Who is Maria?"

"Maria Twist," said Amy, her delight at Miss Dix's kindness greatly disturbed by the thought that very likely at this moment Maria was angrily wondering why she did not return.

"And what is your name?"

"Amy Carr."

"Are you and Maria sisters?"

"No; we live in the same house. I call Mr. Herbert father. He's Maria's grandfather, though. They adopted me. That was before Maria's mother came here to live."

"Fold in this way. How long ago might that be?"

"Six years. When mother died. Maria's grandmother, I mean."

"Oh, then, you have had death in your house."

"Yes, we have had death; and a dreadful accident. Last year, father—he was an engi-

neer on the railroad—was thrown off the track, and had both of his legs broken. One of 'em had to be taken off, and the other isn't any use much. He's just getting about again in his chair.

"The railroad people took care of him, but it has cost us a great deal beside, his sickness has. We couldn't run to them for everything. He wouldn't allow it, either. He means to go to work at something again pretty soon. He keeps talking about it all the time. But he can't ever be an engineer again."

Miss Dix was now quite decided—she would employ this girl. Even if she should not prove to be the kind of assistant she would like best, she *must* employ her. For to her it seemed that this was a call no Christian woman would dare disregard.

Amy saw that she had found a friend here, and she wanted this friend should know all her heart, so by and by said :

"The first time I ever came here to look for you I thought I saw you going up the street, and so I followed on till I came to the meeting."



"What meeting?" asked Miss Dix.

"In the room behind the church."

"Oh! . . . You thought you saw me going in! Did you follow me then,—the one you thought was me."

"Wasn't it you?"

"How long since was it, Amy."

"Three weeks to-day."

"No, it wasn't me. This is the first day I have been out for a longer time than that. Did you go in?"

"Yes; a lady asked me in, and I went."

"Did you ever go before?"

"No."

"And haven't you ever been since?"

"Yes. For I promised her I would. But not till this morning. I couldn't. I *thought* I couldn't. I don't know. . . . I suppose I wouldn't."

"And so it was thinking I led the way there that took you first into the chapel! I wish that I might lead you into all the pleasant paths of righteousness. But there's a better guide than I."

Miss Dix smiled as she spoke, and Amy's heart grew warm.

"I hoped I should find you there," she said.

"And ONE was there you didn't think of, I dare say. Find Him and He will give you all you need of friends, and love, and wisdom."

Amy listened with all her heart to these and other words Miss Dix spoke; for while this woman talked of Jesus, her speech had a wonderful, heavenly sound. At the same time she was working rapidly, and so skillfully, that Miss Dix was satisfied she should find her a profitable helpmate.

When the bell rang for twelve Miss Dix arose from the table, and said,

"We must talk this business over with your friends. If your father is willing, I shall be glad to teach you all I know."



## X.

SO they went out into the street together. They had hardly stepped upon the pavement when Amy felt her dress pulled, and looking over her shoulder, she saw Stephen Rider walking close behind her with an empty basket swinging on his arm.

"See here!" he cried, "Twenty!" and he showed her a handful of silver, while at the same time he ran on.

"He means," said Amy to Miss Dix, "that he's made twenty shillings to-day. I've wished I could peddle fruit, like Stephen, or do anything. . . . He pays his mother's rent, and and pretty nearly supports the family. I wish I could ever do as much."

"Then do not fear about it. Anybody who is in earnest about any good work may hope for God's blessing in performing it."

"Maria is going to be a milliner's girl. I

was afraid I should have to learn that trade—though it's true what she says, that I can't tell colors. For I didn't see there was anything else I could do. She likes that business, but I don't, I hate it.

"It is an honorable occupation, though. I know some excellent people who don't hate it. They earn their living in that way."

"But Maria thinks I'm lazy ; and she says I don't want a trade. I'll show her now."

"You don't say that like a Christian. I hope you *will* show her . . . 'But if a man love not his brother whom he has seen.' Do you remember the rest of it?"

Amy did not answer. She did *not* remember it. She felt certain, however, that there was reason for her to be ashamed, and she blushed, and her eyes fell before the kind and serious look Miss Dix cast upon her.

"'How shall he love God whom he has not seen?'" continued Miss Dix. "Don't forget the beginning or the end of that verse."

Amy made an effort, and a great effort it cost her, to reply,



"If I should ever go for a milliner, I would have to live away from home, and I don't know what would become of father then. I know he wants me with him; he'd miss me. He's been used to me longer than he has to Maria. When you see him you'll understand that I must do something — *everything* for him. Won't you tell him so?"

"Certainly, I will do all I can for you, my child."

"Well, this is where we live. Will you tell him *all* about it?" asked Amy, hurriedly. "I want he should know everything, of course. For it seems to me so strange, as if I had been led. I don't feel as if I'd had my own way a bit about it. That is father sitting on the steps."

Amy opened the gate as she spoke, and led the way to the front door.

The door stood open, and Mr. Herbert sat in the entry, reading a newspaper. His hair that was black once was now beginning to look very gray, and his face had many a wrinkle.

This was the man who had driven the "iron

horse" up and down the railroad, thousands and thousands of miles. But he would drive that horse no more. A look at him told this. What cares and trials he had passed through, to leave on his face such marks and lines of pain! Such furrows, and such crosses!

The solemn face said for him that he saw few rays of light in the future years that he might yet live through.

He hardly smiled now, though it was Amy who was coming; smiles were rare in these days, on his sad anxious face.

Miss Dix was the first to speak, and he gave her time to tell her errand before he said a word. He seemed very much surprised when she was through, and looked to Amy for an explanation, as if he could hardly believe that he had heard aright.

"Well, sit ye down," said he. "Let's understand what all this ye're talking is about. Is it some of your getting up, Amy? Are you tired of your book? or is the young lady here hard pushed for help?"

"It's both," said Amy. "Miss Dix wants me



to help her, and I want to be helping myself, father. I'm old enough to be earning my bread."

The old man looked at the child thoughtfully a few moments, then he turned to Miss Dix, and his lips quivered while he said,

"I was intending to give this Amy, here, my little girl she is"—he said this so fondly that Amy drew nearer to him and laid her hand in his, while her look was full of love, "that's the most I thought of, to give her a good education. But there's been trouble in this house. You see what's happened to *me*. I'm an old vessel wrecked. No use talking. It's all over with *me*. Never was a man who took more care of himself, to keep out of danger than I. For I knew, behind my engine, that I was in slippery places. But in twenty year there hadn't been a single serious accident on my part of the line. We was coming round a curve, ma'am, slow and steady, but the minute we touched the bridge I saw it go. And this was what was saved of *me* out of it. I don't know as I'd ever lifted my head up after it, if I hadn't got some-

thing to show for that break. There was thirty men that never moved again after we got down into the bed of the river, fur as we *could* go. But, then, no one of 'em all, I take it, would 'a changed places with me, if they could 'a done it. I'm a used up old man. I've been hard on the girls, they've had a hard row, the girls have, but it's kept 'em together, knowing I was here."

"Father! you an old man! don't talk so! And he won't be a used-up man, either, Miss Dix, when he gets that cart!"

"Yes—yes"—said he, in a low voice, "that's what I've come to—a cart!"

He spoke so bitterly, Amy, in spite of her hopefulness, felt the great pain of his speech.

"Father," said she, in a very low voice, not looking at Miss Dix now, "father, I've been to have my FORTUNE told."

"Silly girl!" he answered. Then he spoke more kindly, "poor child!" for he thought she spoke of the fortune-teller Maria talked so much about. And though he had no patience with such folly, he had pity for his daughters,



born to so hard a lot. Oh, if all things were but in *his* hands, what easy fortunes would he tell, and *give* them!

"I don't mean what the gipsey woman said," said Amy, and this time she did look at Miss Dix. She hoped that her new friend would help her through this story. "No," said that good woman, "it isn't luck that your Amy believes in, and hopes in, Mr. Herbert. It's Providence. She believes that God orders all things. And she's glad that He does. She is glad that He orders all her goings. And she thinks that He led her to me. And she feels safe in his heavenly hands."

"Yes, father, that is it!" said Amy, drawing yet closer to the poor old man who had covered his eyes with his hands while Miss Dix was speaking. "Yes, father, that is it! You took me when there wasn't anybody else to do it. And I believe He gave me to you, and I don't ever mean to leave you. If I go to work in Miss Dix's room I shall be here to get every meal for you, and always stay home evenings . . . and"—

She could say no more. Her voice, which through all the last-spoken words was very unsteady, now failed her altogether.

On the silence that followed the old man's words came Maria's voice. She had heard Amy speaking, and was looking for her.

"That's the way you keep your promise, is it? Leaving me with all the work. A good deal of good it does you to be strolling off to prayer-meetings in the morning, and gadding about all day!"

And, so speaking, Maria came around the corner to the front door, and if you had seen her then you would have felt sorry for her.

"Maria!" exclaimed her grandfather, in a voice that made her tremble for its severity.

"Let me explain," said Miss Dix, hastily. "Come here, Maria, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Come, Maria," said Amy.

"Come, child," said Mr. Herbert.

So Maria came to hear what you have heard already. Was she glad do you think? She looked more ashamed than satisfied.



## XI.

SO Amy was now fairly at work.

ALL day, and every day of the week, except Sunday, she was in the basement, industriously at work, and very happy in her labor; dreaming, meanwhile, many a pleasant dream of what should be done with her earnings. A little money buys so many comfortable things. People who make no account of six-pences have not the least idea of what they are worth to poor people who must keep account of all changes in the market prices.

How many various things she was thinking she would buy for her father's comfort! Never would she tire working for him who had been so kind to her.

How kind he *had* been to her. And she knew it all. All that she *could* know, for, of course, she never could be made to under-

stand how many anxious cares and thoughts he had on her account. And something she must never be told. How did it happen that she came to be living in his house, as if she had been born there, and was his own dear child?

Her name was Amy Carr. That was what he called her. And there was meaning in the name.

For one dull, cold winter morning, when the rain and the snow were contending together so furiously, that, for a long time, it was doubtful which would carry the day, as the fireman was about to leave his engine, the conductor called to him from the first car, and when he had called, he disappeared within the car again. So it was clear he meant that the engineer should follow him. Mr. Herbert accordingly went back instead of forward, for he had just now, as he took the last look at the engine, said, "Forward! March!" to himself, and *forward! march!* meant home!

He was in a hurry to get there, and no wonder, for he knew what a neat, cheerful, comfortable house it was that always waited



for him, and that his wife, Amy, would have breakfast on the stove, and very likely was already looking down the road, expecting every moment that he would come in sight.

But the conductor had called him, so, of course, there was something wanting ; therefore he went back instead of forward.

When he opened the car door he saw the conductor standing half way down the passage, looking at one of the seats, and a curious expression was on his face, it seemed to be a mixture of anger and of pity.

The fireman walked along, and when he came to the conductor's seat he also looked down, and what did he see ? He saw a little girl fast asleep—a child, perhaps, three years old.

“That's a pretty sight to see here such a morning as this,” said the conductor, speaking angrily.

“What on earth does it mean ?” asked the fireman. “Here—alone !” For it did not enter his honest head or heart to suspect that

any one could have been so cruel as to abandon a little, helpless creature like that.

"Mean!" exclaimed the conductor, indignantly. "It means that somebody has gone off and left her; and what are we going to do?"

"Do!" said the fireman, and he looked at the conductor and through the car window. "Good gracious! won't anybody be coming after her? On telegraphing or something?"

"I guess likely not," said the conductor. "I'd know what to do well enough if I was at the other end of the line. I'd put her into the Foundling Hospital, and she'd be well taken care of in case it turned out she *was* lost. But there isn't any such snug place here to tuck her into. And I don't know anybody in this place I'd ask to take her in. She can't lie there and sleep forever. A good thing for her if she could. She's got to wake up sometime."

The fireman stood silent a moment—tears rolled down his face. "I do—I know of a place," said he. "She's got to wake up sometime, as you say—well. She shall find a good



roof over her head when she does. So here goes!" And as he spoke, he lifted the child, and laid her little sleeping head under a fold of his shaggy overcoat.

"Wait," said the conductor, "here is something pinned to her back—some writing."

"Read it." The engineer's voice trembled.

"It says: '*Amy Carr—Three years old—She's yours.*' Well, Herbert," that seems to mean you."

"'*She's yours.*' Does it say that! Then they meant to leave her!"

"To be sure they did. I never supposed anything else. Folks an't apt to forget their children when they're traveling with them. Here's a satchel, too, under the seat. Her things, I suppose."

"Then there won't be any telegraph, or anything?"

"You may make your mind easy about that."

The engineer seemed greatly perplexed, but finally he said,

"I'll take her home any way. I can't leave her here. I'll talk about it with my wife."

"She'll be good advice," said the conductor.

So the engineer trudged home with this burden in his arms.

He tried to hide the little, bright pink bundle with his rough coat-sleeves, but he could not quite manage it, for his wife, as she stood and watched him as he came, wondered what it could be he was carrying so carefully. For he walked along, stooping over, and picking his steps, not at all in his usual manner, swinging his arms, and taking the shortest cut home, no matter though it led him over the roughest paths.

When he came to the door of his house it was open. There stood his wife waiting for him to come in.

He looked at her. Was she the woman to hear such a story as he had to tell?

"See here," said he. For he did not doubt that good and tender heart. "See what I've picked up." And he held up the label on the cape before her eyes, so that she could read it.

And she read,  
"AMY CARR. THREE YEARS OLD. SHE'S YOURS."



The woman looked into the little child's face and back again to her husband.

"What *does* this mean?" she asked.

He held up the satchel.

"It means," said he, "that somebody left her in the cars, and I have brought her here. She mustn't lie there and freeze—sleep herself to death, maybe."

"Oh, what a cruel, cruel thing!" said the engineer's wife, and she bent her face over the little girl, who opened her eyes just then. They were the same soft, lovely eyes that looked so lovingly on Mr. Herbert at this day.

Well, they kept the little girl. Nobody ever telegraphed for her. Nobody ever came for her. Year by year she grew more precious to the kind hearts that protected her.

At first they were always thinking that any day some one might come to claim the child. This expectation grew to be a fear. For they loved Amy so well that they felt that if ever they must give her up to any one it would be as if death had come into the house. But no one ever came for her.

Death came though. The wife of the engineer was taken away. What a comfort then that Amy was here to ease the sad heart of Mr. Herbert, to make his house cheerful, to attend to all his wants, to love him and make him feel that he had a home yet on earth, and something to live for!

Maria's mother died not long after; then Maria came to live in her grandfather's house; so it was that the two girls were like sisters there, though not like very loving sisters.

But in regard to her early history Amy knew no more than that she was the adopted child of Mr. Herbert. Herbert said to his wife long ago,

"We will never tell her how she was abandoned. That would be like bringing a black frost down on the violets."



## XII.

MISS DIX understood very well Amy's desire and hope. And what her settled purpose was she knew. More than once tears filled her eyes as she looked at the sweet, serious face of the child. Were they tears of sorrow, as she thought of the hard fortune this young girl was born to? Of sorrow that she must labor with her own hands for a living? That she was not the heir of wealth and of idleness? That she should not sit and fold her hands, and be waited on, and study, or let it alone, as is the fortune of a great multitude of children? No; they were tears of satisfaction that *she* should have it in her power to encourage and direct this courageous child. And to God she prayed that he would guide her and take care of her.

I wonder whether you will understand anything of the satisfaction Amy felt when Miss

Dix paid her the wages she had earned, at the end of the first week of work in the basement.

Her first thought now, as she started home with her money in her pocket, was of Stephen and the sixpence she owed him. She should soon be out of debt.

As she went down the street she saw him standing before a shop window. It was brilliantly lighted with gas, and gaily decorated.

Stephen was thinking of *his* shop, that was to be, a dozen years from now. On which corner of the Park should it be ; what goods he should like best to sell, and how they should all be arranged. He had nearly settled all these matters to his satisfaction, and was about to run on again, when Amy came along and stopped.

When he saw it was she he waited of course, and said,

"*I* wouldn't have them oranges pitched into a window that way. I'd have a reg'lar pyramid of the very biggest kind. They'd bring double the money they will dumped down in that way."



"That would be beautiful," said Amy ; she seemed to see the lofty red and yellow pyramid he had in his mind. Then she remembered what it was she had intended to do the first time she met him, and she said, "Oh ! here's your sixpence, Stephen, I hope I won't ever owe you another."

"That's polite !" said he, laughing ; "I'm sure you needn't be afraid I'd ever ask you for it."

"I wasn't afraid," said Amy, "but you know I'm earning my living now, and I get a dollar a week."

"Do *you* ? well that's good, anyhow ! and it's the right kind of feeling to want to keep out of debt. I like that !"

Stephen spoke quite like a man of business, made wise by experience. I dare say you would have smiled to hear him saying such things—this little ill-clad creature, looking so mild, so eager, and so shrewd. But Amy did not smile. She thought it was good advice, and she meant to act upon it—to keep out of debt.



"But I don't want that sixpence," said he. "You've as good as paid for it beforehand, and a great deal more. You've always been neighborly to us. Mother thinks so too. I've often heard her say so. Besides, you know you lost your money to begin with.... I wonder if you keep thinking over what that old woman told you. Don't you kind o' hold on to it, what she said has got to come to pass?"

Amy blushed; she wished Stephen had not asked that question.

"Don't you, now?" said he, pushing into the matter in his way of carrying through whatever he attempted to discover.

"I wished I could forget it right off, then," said she, "and I wish I didn't ever think of it now."

"Hail Columbia! I know what that means!" exclaimed Stephen. "You think she's a liar, but for all that you can't help remembering what she said."

Amy did not want to hear another word about it; so she went into the grocer's and made her purchases for the house. The boy went in also,



and looked about, and finally bought the finest orange in the window.

When they came to the gate of Mr. Herbert's yard, he said,

"Here is a present for your father, Amy," and he perched the orange on the top of the bundles she carried. She knew he had bought it with the sixpence she paid to him just now.

What a week's close was that! What a wonderful Saturday evening! How happy and how strong did Amy feel as she sat on her mother's low chair and counted the money she had left! She would have paid it into Mr. Herbert's hands; that was her intention, and she endeavored to do it. But he said,

"No, no, child. That will never do. You must have a savings bank, and lay up your money. That's the way I began life. Keep track of the sixpences, and the shillings will look after themselves."

Poor Herbert! he could not believe it was actually true that the hands of these two girls were to be the support of his old age; that the money they earned by labor was going to buy



the bread he ate, and the clothes he wore, and the coal that kept them warm. It was all right, he thought, that they should depend on him, but all wrong that he should depend on them. His pride rebelled against that, and his love rebelled against it ; but neither pride nor love could do anything but submit, for the present.

Maria's work as a housekeeper was now nearly at an end. She had succeeded in making what they all considered a very favorable engagement with Miss Butler, a milliner, who had a large and fashionable establishment, and it was necessary, of course, that she should now live away from home. It must come to that, though none of them acknowledged it in so many words, when they were talking the business over.

"To be sure, sir," said Miss Butler, in reply to Mr. Herbert, who was endeavoring to secure for his grandchild all the advantages possible, in making these arrangements, "Maria shall have Sundays for herself. Whenever our work admits of it, and that will be almost the year round, she shall come home Saturday evening,



and stay with you till Monday morning. If she performs the work expected, after three months have expired I shall pay her wages. I have no doubt, judging from what I have seen of her, that I shall be pleased with Maria, and I hope she will be satisfied with my service."

And so Maria went away from home to live.

From the quiet lane to the broad street—from the little brown cottage under the shade of the great elm tree and the willows, to a high brick building that had not so much as a green shrub or a blade of grass in its neighborhood; from the quiet of home to the bustle of the work-room, and the activity of the work-shop; from grandfather and Amy to Miss Butler and at least twenty girls, whose dress, it seemed to Maria, put her own to shame; from generous and tender care of her poor grandfather to a place where the chief thing evident was a selfish-looking out for one's own interest.

If ever a girl had need to pray "*deliver me from temptation,*" Maria Twist had need when she went into Miss Butler's service. *Did* she so pray? Why, she felt no fear! What par-



ticular danger was she in, that she should pray? That would have been her question, if any one had looked at her with pitying eyes as she closed the street door behind her and stood in Miss Butler's shop, on the day when she entered the service of the milliner.

Precisely in her confidence Maria's danger lay. Her temptation was not to rebel against the law and order of the shop; against the authority exercised over her there; against the duty required of her. No; but she was *living* now in the midst of silks and ribbons, laces, velvets, and "the latest fashions from New York and Paris."

From morning till night the talk she heard was about these things; the people she saw were interested in such matters. Well, and where was the wonder? How could it be otherwise? Is not a milliner's shop the place where you buy your bonnet? and the people are not all Quakers, and the fashion of this world is a thing that is forever changing, forever passing away.

But, then, when Miss Butler fell into the



habit of calling for Maria as often as a lady wished to see a new bonnet on somebody's head beside her own, that she might criticize it and discover its beauties, could Maria help remembering what the fortune-teller said, that her face would make her fortune, by and by?

So what do you think about it? Was Maria in a fair way to fight a good fight, in the midst of this exhibition of costly and dainty articles of dress, herself often placed on exhibition for the benefit of the idle and fashionable women who strolled into Miss Butler's shop-room every fine morning to chat away an hour they knew not what else to do with?

Do you think there's no particular need for her to use the prayer our Jesus taught his poor foolish earth-born friends? Did he not know our need? Did he not look forward from Galilee to America, and see the girls here, like Maria, who would *need* sometime to know that if they uttered that cry, the Father would surely hear them and send his deliverance, and encompass them with protection?



But Maria! *she* is in no danger! she is abundantly able to take care of herself!

And she is not going to make a fright of herself, she says, reflecting on the figure she must present to the eyes of people, by wearing any longer those old-fashioned rags of hers: all the other girls are "respectably" clad; they dress in good taste; their clothes look as if they were made for *them*, and not for their grandmothers!

Maria liked the shop. That is not quite the same as saying that she liked her work. But she did also like the employment she found there.

She liked the colors and the textures of the stuffs she handled. She liked the flood of gas-light that poured into the rooms by night—what a contrast, those bright rooms, to the dark shadows in the corners of the kitchen at home, where one little lamp was burning! She liked the gossip she heard; liked to be rid of the pain of seeing an old man sitting helpless from morning till night in the house.

And should we not be glad that Maria's oc-



cupation was precisely such as her fingers were designed for? Verily, yes! There are so many kinds of honorable work to be done in this busy world, it seems indeed a pity that ever a pair of hands or an intelligent brain should be occupied with that which is a painful, or a troublesome, or a joyless task. No one is born to idleness—and how shall the workers sing on through their labor, and so keep time with the singing spheres, unless their hands have found to do the very work that nature intended?

Maria took to her work, as people said, quite naturally. She did not desire any other. And we should rejoice with her, as with all who find work easy, pleasant, and honorable; who are satisfied with their business, and feel sure it was given them to do.

Ah, yes! if Maria had not felt so very *safe*, as well as so content; if she had only understood that nowhere on this earth is a young girl safe who feels that she can take care of herself without troubling Him who is away off in his Heaven, taking care of his universe, and not thinking at all of her!



If she had only believed so that she must *live* by the belief, that God was himself her helper, her shield, her staff, her light, and her Redeemer, then, indeed, she and we might talk about her safety, and say that her courage was noble, and never fear for the duration of her content. No matter what her employment, if it was honorable, and she was fitted to it; no matter where her path lay; Maria would then have been safe.

*Because, where the angel of the Lord encamps,  
is safety.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil; for,  
Thou art with me.*

*Because he hath set his love upon ME, there-  
fore will I deliver him.*

But what are even shields of gold, and strong arms of human love, if they are the only defences the soul seeks for itself?

Look where the self-confident mortal goes his way rejoicing; if you turn to see it stumbling, ere long, you will not look in vain. If you listen to hear it complain of the darkness,



you will not listen in vain. Alas, when we shut God out of this world, and walk on in it alone, so proud, so vain, so sure we understand all the ways, and are above all the needs, do we really not know that we have shut out all the blessedness, the glory, and the beauty, and have only kept the sorrow and care, the pain and death, the anguish and the curse?

Why, only think of it! there was *room* for God there in Miss Butler's shop!

Is there room for Thee, oh, thou blessed one, who hast said, "*If any man will open to me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me,*" and shall we shut Thee out of our place of habitation, our work-shop, or our show-room? Then surely we may go learn hospitality of the wild men of the desert and the forest.

Solomon, who had not seen the son of Mary,—no wonder that he scarcely dared invite the great Jehovah to "dwell with men" in the temple he had built; but the Holy One has asked our invitation—He will come whenever we call. Yes! Jehovah has come down even to our low estate, and given to us JESUS, for whom we



must find room. Oh, no longer let Him say we gave to Him no kiss, and that He has not where to lay his head!

But Maria was not troubled by such a thought as this of King Solomon's. She was not disturbed with the consideration that this place was not good enough for Him to rest in. *She wanted Him not!* To carry her conscience about with her everywhere, as Amy seemed to do, what a nuisance that would be! She believed herself to be well off, indeed, and safe, as good as the rest, and why should she set herself up for a saint, or bother herself forever with thinking about her "duty?"

Poor Maria—so endangered, walking among quicksands—she never said "Lord, deliver me!" She could take care of herself! She was earning her own living!

Surrounded by allurements, never once she cried, "Lead me not into temptation."

Still, when she put on her new bonnet and cape, not long after her work began in Miss Butler's shop, and appeared in them on Sunday morning before Amy and her grandfather, she



felt a little anxious, wondering what Amy would think. For Amy, of course, would never understand that a girl who worked at such a trade as a milliner's could not go about dressed like a nun."

What *did* Amy think? She said,

"Why, Maria, how fine you are! I never should have known you."

It pleased Maria to hear Amy saying that, for though Amy looked astonished, there was no reproof in her voice, or her eyes, on account of Maria's extravagance; and that was what Maria expected to encounter, and for it she had prepared herself.

"How do you like the rig?" said she. "I had to get it, you know."

"You look like a lady," said Amy. "I didn't think you would look like that."

"Why not?" asked Maria, not very well pleased by that remark.

"Well, I mean you never looked so nice before. What a lovely bonnet!" said Amy.

"If you want to look like a lady, all you've



got to do is to dress yourself decently," explained Maria.

"And act like one, and *be* one," said Amy.

"Of course; everybody knows that. It sounds as if you had read it out of a spelling-book. You must have a bonnet like mine, Amy. Your old one is a perfect fright. I don't suppose you have the least idea how it looks. You wouldn't look like the same person in a bonnet like mine. You must just treat yourself to one."

"I! no, indeed, I mustn't," answered Amy. She seemed quite terrified at the mere thought of such a thing. "The old one is good enough. Anyway, I don't lose much time getting through the streets, and I don't believe anybody ever knows what I have on."

"Well, now, you don't believe any such thing! They see even Stephen Rider. I heard the girls laughing about him the other day; and you are a head taller than Stephen; so your bonnet can't help being seen."

Maria laughed, but she was very much in earnest, saying this.



"I can't get a bonnet yet," said Amy.

"Well, I wasn't going to order it to-night ; but you must do it pretty quick, I warn you, or when you go to look for your old one, you won't find it. Somebody will burn it up by mistake. Here's a bonnet-ribbon I brought for you. How do you like it?"

"You haven't brought this for me!" exclaimed Amy, unrolling the ribbon ; it was a pretty blue, with a vine along the edges. Maria had bought Amy this present to smooth the way for her own conscience.

"Of course it's for you," said Maria ; "there isn't anything so very surprising about that, is there? I hope you know how to take a present."

"A present! no, *that* mustn't be," said Amy.

"Bring your bonnet, anyway, for I am in a hurry ; let's see what can be done with it."

So Amy brought the old straw bonnet and stood by while Maria cut off the worn and faded ribbons, and ordered them into the stove. She was in excellent spirits and made Amy

laugh, while she went on rapidly with her work of trimming.

"Now tell me ; do you ever go to meeting in these days ?" asked she, when she had nearly done.

"Sometimes," Amy said.

"Well, won't you feel better ; confess ! with a respectable bonnet on your head ? Folks must have thought the highway and hedges had turned in when they saw you and Stephen."

"I don't care what they think. They always treat me kindly. And Miss Dix don't seem to be ashamed of me."

"Don't be spunky. That won't do, you know. It isn't lady-like ; and besides, it isn't Christian."

"Well, what makes you say such things ? Do you ever go to the meeting, Maria ?"

"I ! what does the child think a girl is at Miss Butler's for ? why, from morning till night I never have a moment that's my own. Miss Butler can't help it though, and I don't complain. I like to be in a hurry ; but, you know,



anyway, those meetings are a dull kind of amusement, I think."

"Amusement!"

"Yes, amusement; you know you go for the singing. I expect you'll be a full choir, or a band, one of these days. I'll come to the meeting-house when that happens. But at present we have to sit in Miss Butler's pew, you know, on Sunday, if we go to church at all. At least the girls say that's what she wants; but *I* can stay with grandfather. I like to go though well enough. How is grandfather getting on without us, do you think?"

"Oh, Maria, pretty well, I guess, but how lonesome he must be. Still the neighbors are very kind. And that's what I wanted to tell you, but you put it out of my head. There's an old gentleman—I heard him one day speaking—it was in the meeting, Maria, but you must like him for all that. Stephen brought him here to see father yesterday, and he's coming often, he says; he hasn't any work to do. He's a gentleman, and so kind. Father liked him, too. His name is Mr. Spingler."

"Well, that's the best thing I've heard in a week," said Maria, and she really did look glad; "there's your bonnet. Now let's go hear what grandfather has to tell about the gentleman. And when I say I must go, Amy, don't you try to keep me; it might plague him, and I really haven't but a minute or two more."

"But, Maria, in the first place, I thank you so much; but I'm so sorry that you got that ribbon."

"You must try to reconcile yourself to it, for what's done can't be helped, you know," said Maria, "folks won't think the worse of you for looking respectable. Come, I'm losing time."



## XIII.

WHEN the girls used to talk with Mr. Herbert about the cart, he did not take it very pleasantly. You remember what he said about it the day Miss Dix came home with Amy to talk with him about Amy's future. And of course his feeling could not be wondered at. A man who has driven the iron horse which has a spirit of fire, for years and years, does not find the prospect of wheeling himself about over pavements, and sitting at street corners, the vender of small wares, fruits, newspapers, and so forth, very agreeable.

It offended Mr. Herbert to think of himself as an object of compassion, exposed to public observation. How many times should he be obliged to tell the story of his misfortunes to curious people, who would say "what a pity!" and go their ways just as if they had read a paragraph in a newspaper, that reported some

accident by which a man had lost his legs, straightway forgetting, while *he* could never forget!

Besides, what if he succeeded in selling his wares? After all, what a difference between this and the regular way of trade! The people who bought of him, and he who sold, would feel that it was charity. And to think of coming to that! It was a bitter reflection. No wonder he shrank from it. But what could he do?

Now that the girls were fairly at work, both of them, under Miss Butler and Miss Dix, this question was forever coming back to him, and he must answer it.

He said to himself one day, when he was alone in the house:

"Old Herbert, what is the reason? You are well enough now to be at some kind of work. Why don't you set about it? Are you going to sit here forever till you get to be as weak as a woman in your heart? Weak as a woman! Wife, I'll take that back. I never saw you weak in anything but wickedness and hard-heartedness. You weren't strong enough



for that. And there are those girls, little as they are, they're strong enough for work. So am I!"

That brought him back to the question :

"What will you do?"

And he remembered the cart.

Mr. Herbert had been a strong man in his day, but a cold shiver crept over his frame, succeeded by a hot flash, when that cart seemed to wheel itself up before his eyes, and stop short, as if waiting for him to get in. Was it going to prove itself a very Juggernaut car for crushing his pride out of him? His pride! What was he, to entertain so extravagant a guest?

It was curious that Mr. Spingler had got to talking on this very subject in one of his late visits, for he was now a frequent visitor, and a very friendly one.

Had Stephen put it into that man's head?

For Mr. Spingler said,

"Mr. Herbert, I don't like to think of you shut up here in this way, sir. You must get out; you must live in the open air, as you have

been in the habit of living. It's the sunlight you want."

When he said that, Mr. Herbert answered :

"The sun has set, sir, and the twilight is about over."

"That's just your mistake. I know it!" said the hale and cheery old gentleman, wiping his eyes as he spoke. "You've set in here in the shade so long, no wonder you've lost your reckoning, and mistake the time of day. It isn't but a little past noon with you. Perhaps, sir—I shouldn't wonder at anything—my house is down there on a corner of the Park—I expect and hope you'll come down and spend part of your evening with me! Don't you see how easy it would be to keep a shop down there, if you could only persuade yourself that you've got all the afternoon for resting in?"

These words, and others like them, had acted on Mr. Herbert like a tonic. He had not repeated them, but he thought of them over and over. What *if* the afternoon and the evening of his life should be warmed indeed by the set-



ting sun and cheerful company and steady occupation?

He was thinking of these things when Stephen Rider came into the house, as he came every day at noon to inquire if anything was wanting, in the absence of Amy. Stephen was always in a hurry; he seemed to live on a run.

When Mr. Herbert saw him standing there so full of life, where, just now, he seemed to see the cart, he was amazed—seemed to be waking from a dream—and he envied the lad.

“Here’s a newspaper,” said Stephen. “Mr. Spingler sent it to you. A new one, I guess. How do you find yourself, sir? Is there anything you’ll have?”

“Yes; a pair of legs!” There it was, abruptly spoken—right out of the poor man’s heart—the constant wish, that was a helpless wish, for it never could be granted.

A shadow seemed to fall over Stephen’s face at these words. “I’d work my arms off to get ’em for you, if that would do it,” said he.

“I ought to know better than to sit here wishing at my time of day. A child couldn’t be



more silly," said Mr. Herbert, ashamed to think how in spite of his resolutions he had come straight back to his old tiresome reflections.

"Then," said Stephen, "you ought to be in the street."

"That's what Mr. Spingler says, and it's easy enough said, too," was Mr. Herbert's answer.

"Everybody says it," said Stephen. His face brightened when Herbert mentioned Mr. Spingler, as if he felt that the point was now as good as carried, since the old gentleman had taken the business up. "If you should get out into the street, and down as far as the Park once (Mr. Spingler lives down there), it would be a reg'lar good thing," said he. "You'd have some fresh things to think about. We could get you down there early in the morning, the same time Amy started to her work, and leave the old house here to take care of itself—mother would mind the fires—and then you and Amy could come back together at night, and I'd be around to help; and what jolly evenings you'd have here after it was all over! . . . That



thing would roll right into the house, you know."

"*That thing*" was the cart, as Mr. Herbert very well understood. And he knew why Stephen hesitated about naming it to him.

"You think that I'm worse than an old rag-doll, Stephen," said he, "or you wouldn't be afraid to say *cart* to me right out."

"Cart!" said Stephen, laughing. "Who's afraid? Now, Mr. Herbert, let me wheel it round for you, and have it here all ready for Amy to look at when she gets home to-night."

"I wish you would," said the engineer. Stephen did not wait to hear that permission repeated.

And so, when Amy came home in the afternoon, there, in the kitchen, stood the cart!

"My engine," said Mr. Herbert, when she stood and looked at it, and could not speak for amazement and gladness. "You and Stephen must help me get the steam up, and keep me on the track. And shall I have to carry a bell along for warning, in case there is any danger of a collision?"



Amy laughed at that question as if she did not hear in it a groan. But she did hear it, and her heart responded to it. Still she answered cheerily, and he never suspected her prayer, "God help him!"

"There'll never be any danger of a collision," said she. "You won't need a bell, father. And, oh! 'that will be joyful,' to know you are out in the sun again, enjoying yourself with other people. We can go everywhere together, when you get used to it—to the grave-yard!—and you'll see then how the willows have grown. And they are going to have the meeting in the afternoon pretty soon, do you know, and there aren't any steps to go up, you can roll right into the chapel. I should think it was made for you, father. Oh, I'm so happy!"

Mr. Herbert could not doubt that when he looked at Amy. He said to himself, it must be worth while for him to live a little longer if she could get so glad over so slight a thing concerning him, as this affair of the cart was likely to prove.



The very next morning saw Mr. Herbert in the street.

You might have supposed that he was some great dignitary, from the way people gathered around him in the Park, where Amy left him.

First and foremost, there was old Mr. Spingler, who came down from his house on the corner, about five minutes after the cart was wheeled into a shady place. When he took Mr. Herbert's hand and shook it, he said, "Bless you!" and "Thank you!" in a way to make one think that some remarkable service had been conferred on him! When he could control his voice sufficiently, to say anything connectedly, he pointed out to Mr. Herbert the house where he lived, and told him that he should regard him now as his nearest neighbor, and many a talk they should have together, in pleasant weather, under the awning.

He took great satisfaction, also, in pointing out the fine new blocks of buildings erected since Mr. Herbert was carried home a cripple, three years ago. The new fountain, too, had a



history that must be told. But if the old gentleman had not made himself so agreeable, no danger that Herbert would have grown lonely while he sat there in his cart.

"Bless you!" said Stephen, when he was making his report of the day to Amy at night, "Bless you! *I* never got sight of him for three hours after you went, only as I edged my way in between folks—so many came to see him. Everybody knew him, and everybody was glad; and I had to look to it, you know that they didn't eat him up. It's going to be easy enough all the rest of it is; for I heard,—I don't know how many, telling him he must keep a stand for newspapers there, and they would all buy of him. And I've got a secret besides! Can you keep a secret, Amy?" Amy thought she could.

"Mr. Spingler is going to invest in him! I'm to get the early papers, dozens of 'em, every morning, and he's as good as set your father up in business! A kind of bookstore in the street! Do you understand?"

Stephen was in a state of great excitement



by the time he had got through this declaration of doings and intentions. So was Amy ; she cried, and did not try to hide her tears. And Stephen's eyes were not dry.

May neither of them ever know any sadder tears than these ! May their hearts always beat as strongly with thankfulness as now.

This experiment, which Mr. Herbert persevered in making—as anybody might have known he would, when he had once undertaken it—this experiment turned out favorably for himself, Mr. Spingler, and everybody concerned. It became Stephen's morning duty to see that the cart wheeled itself down safely to its corner ; and while he went on his rounds, more than once in the course of the twelve hours of his work, he was standing in front of the engineer's stand, for no other purpose, whatever excuse he might invent, than to discover if everything was going on well with him.

Mr. Spingler said one day to Herbert, as they watched the lad who was running towards the station, for the cars were coming in :



“If anybody should adopt that boy and train him up to business, sir, he would make a man of mark. How shrewd he is! and as honest as the day is long. I declare, it bothers me sometimes, and keeps me awake nights, thinking what shall be done with him. If I were a younger man . . . or if I were doing business . . . I'd see what could be done.”

When he had said this, Mr. Spingler walked away from the corner, and down the street, with his hands clasped behind him, and his head bent. Nobody in those quarters would have noticed him, as if there were anything unusual in these symptoms. Mr. Spingler walked over that same ground, in that same manner, at least twenty times a day. But, when he came back to where Herbert sat, the engineer was not surprised to hear him begin to talk on the same subject again, as if the thought of Stephen had not, for a moment, been lost sight of.

“Mr. Herbert,” said he, “Did I tell you where I first found that lad?”



"No ; running full tilt along some one of the streets, I reckon."

"Not at all, sir. I found him in a prayer-meeting. I was belated a little, myself, so I sat down near the door, and the door stood open. They were singing, I think—yes, they were singing, when I saw him listening just outside the door. He had put his basket down against the side of the porch, and he had a look on his face—perhaps you never saw that look—I cannot describe it, but it made him as different a boy from what you see when he's at his trade, as you can possibly think of. Said I to myself, that boy must come in here, so I stepped out and spoke to him, and invited him to take a seat in the chapel. He wouldn't, he said ; he had his basket ; he only wanted to hear the singing. But it didn't take much urging to get him in. He gave up all at once, and said, 'Are you the old gentleman who made a speech the other day in there ?' Well, I told him, I was sometimes in the habit of making a few remarks. 'If you'll make another speech,' said he, 'I'll go.' That was



a kind of challenge I wasn't likely to refuse. So, says I, 'Come in!' 'Lead on!' said he. And I had to trust him, though I wouldn't have been much surprised to see him running down the lane, as I went in at the door; but he was in earnest. So was I. He followed in, and I did make a speech, sir. And I offered him up to the Lord in it. When he sat down again, he said to me half aloud, 'I'll stand you in that, old gentleman. That was a rousing speech.' He was just as much in earnest as he is about getting you down here mornings; and I say we must look after Stephen Rider."

That was only one of many times that Mr. Spingler was speaking such words about Stephen to Mr. Herbert.

But the summer ended, and he was still merely talking.

According to Stephen's prophecy, Mr. Herbert found himself in business almost without knowing it. Day after day you might have seen him in his place, until the autumn came with rain, and cold, and rheumatism; then the



engineer was rarely to be found at his old stand ; but, sometimes, on the brighter days, he might be seen there for an hour or two. Still it was evident to him, and those most interested in his business, that his season's work was at an end.

Shall I say that Maria was not sorry when Amy told her that her grandfather would not go out any more until the summer came again ? It was not possible, surely, that the cart and the stand crowded the Park so much that it was not pleasant for her to stroll that way, when she had a little leisure, as she used to do !

## XIV.

ONE evening, towards Christmas, Maria ran down home for a brief visit.

Her grandfather was asleep when she went in, so the girls might hold their chat without restraint for a time. Amy was glad of this, for a thought that had been flitting to and fro through her mind for many days, had just presented itself to her in a substantial shape, and she said to Maria :

“We must get some nice, good present for father, Christmas day.”

“So we must,” said Maria. The thought was a new one to her, but she liked it. “What shall it be ? she asked.

“I’d like it to be a nice, warm wrapper,” said Amy, “only he’d think that it was making a sick man of him. He don’t seem half as bright and happy as he was when he could



get out to the Park. Oh, Maria! if we only could make it summer again right away."

"Lined with red and quilted!" exclaimed Maria.

"Yes; but could we ever get him to wear it, do you think?" said Amy.

"Besides, they cost such an awful sight of money."

"Do they? How much?"

"I've heard of some as low as eighteen and twenty dollars."

"As low! Why, Maria, what are you thinking about? You know I don't mean that kind," said Amy, greatly dismayed.

"Of course," said Maria, laughing at Amy's consternation. "That's the kind we make for gentlemen. We have made three lately. I've learned to quilt with the sewing machine, and I believe I can learn to do anything with my hands. The girls say they never saw any one so quick."

"Do they! I'm glad; oh, I'm glad of that!"

"What do you say to a pair of slippers, then?"

“ Oh, Maria !”

“ To be sure ; he wouldn’t want a pair, would he ?” said Maria, blushing scarlet. She knew what Amy thought, how astonishing it was that Maria could forget, for a single instant, her grandfather’s misfortune. “ Well,” she went on impatiently, “ I suppose you’ve got it in your mind what you are going to give him. So, what is it ? there’s no use of *my* saying what it shall be.”

“ Don’t you think a new coat would—” Amy hesitated, and broke off without finishing her sentence.

“ That’s the very thing !” exclaimed Maria ; she spoke with all her heart.

“ The old one is so patched up ; the last time I mended the sleeves I couldn’t find any cloth to match, the coat had faded so. He laughed, but I don’t think he felt much like it. For when father was able to be about he never wore such clothes.”

“ No more he did ! I know it.”

“ Stephen Rider has been buying him a nice new coat, and you don’t know how different he looks. So would father !”



"Has Stephen? well, that's a comfort, any way. Why, Amy, do you know what a regular ragamuffin he had got to look like? And he always *will* stare up at the window where the girls sit, and nod. Then the girls laugh at me. I'm glad he's got a new coat."

Maria was so glad it seemed she had quite forgotten the other coat they had been talking about, but Amy went back to that subject.

"Such nice stuff as it's made of, too!" said she. "It's just the color for father. It won't fade, and it won't show stains, and it looks so warm and comfortable for winter. I went to the shop where they keep such clothes ready made, and I found one just the right color; just the same as Stephen's. Don't you want to go and look at it?"

"Yes, sometime," said Maria, with a yawn that showed she was *not* very eager to complete the proposed purchase.

In fact she was not more than half pleased that Amy had gone so far as to *look* for a garment without first consulting with her.



Amy understood that Maria was not pleased, and said, as if she would apologize,

"I was going by the shop and went in to save time. Besides, you know how foolish I am. It wasn't to save time altogether, though I had that in my head, too, but I never can feel easy when I get a thought unless I do something about it right away. I wish you *could* go to-night and look, Maria."

"It's a nice time to judge of colors by lamp light, to be sure," said Maria, laughing. "I wouldn't trust *your* eyes about it, though, night or day. I'll run in sometime before long and look, seeing you're so anxious. And I'm anxious, too, of course. How much will it cost?"

"Six dollars. That will be three apiece, you know."

Three dollars! Maria did not say she thought that would be a costly present, extravagant for them, but she thought so. Still she pretended to think it very cheap. For of course she would not be outdone by Amy in generosity.



## XV.

MANY days, a whole week, now passed away. Christmas was drawing nearer and nearer, and no purchase had yet been made. When Maria came home again she made no manner of allusion to the coat; neither did Amy. She saw Maria was thinking about other things, and she knew she would be vexed if she were reminded of the coming Christmas, as if she had forgotten it. But at last, when she saw it would not be safe to leave the business unsettled any longer, Amy asked Maria if she had looked in at the clothing store yet.

"No," said Maria, in a resentful way, just as Amy had feared; "when have I had the time? You seem to think I am a lady of leisure."

"No, I don't. I know you're hurried all the time, Maria; only I'm so afraid they will all be gone."



“What if they are? Don’t you suppose there are twenty more as good? They advertise that they’ve thirty thousand coats to sell. I guess you and I will be able to suit ourselves out of all that lot, even if we wait an hour or two.”

This answer provoked Amy so much that she resolved she would say no more about the present. She had done her part. And if I should add that she took a good deal of credit to herself, thinking how much more desirous *she* was of surprising her father Christmas day than Maria seemed to be, it would be the exact truth. And if I said, moreover, that she compared herself and her generosity with Maria’s, to her own great satisfaction, reminding herself of the fact that Maria was ashamed to be seen walking with her in the street when she had on her working dress, and had proved it twice since she herself had appeared in that new bonnet, I should say what was strictly true. Amy’s pride was a different kind of pride from Maria’s; but if she was going to sit down and think while she worked, as often she did, of



Maria's neglects and her selfishness, was not there some danger that she for her part would grow up into a self-righteous woman? It is easier, indeed, to see the faults of others than to correct our own; and Amy was at this very hour proving it. She kept her resolution and said no more to Maria about the coat.

Three days before Christmas, she decided upon making her purchase without Maria's assistance. She found on inquiry that she could buy a jacket, and a jacket she determined it should be.

While she was thinking about it, and about Maria, with some bitterness and indignation, Maria came down to the house.

"Oh, you're here," said she, looking in at the kitchen door. "Where's grandfather?"

"He's in there," said Amy, wondering at such a question; "where should he be but in the house, and perhaps dozing at this hour of the twilight."

"What I wanted to know, is he awake?" asked Maria, looking at Amy as if very much surprised by her short answer.



"He wasn't awake just now," said Amy.

"I hoped he would be taking his nap. Are you cross? If you're not, get on your hood and come. I can go now and look at—you know what. But I can't stay a minute. I just got out for half an hour; and I've run all the way. We're, oh, so crowded with work. Getting everybody ready for Christmas."

That was all true. And Maria looked so tired and so hurried, that Amy of course could not do otherwise than get on her overshoes, hood, and shawl, and they went off together.

"Now," said Maria, as Amy softly closed the door, "if grandpa' should call you in a minute, you'll be back to answer; so quick, he won't guess we've been out, and we must just fly."

And as they ran along together down the lane into the street, they did seem almost to fly; and when they spoke to each other their words had a kindly, friendly sound.

It was a good many blocks down Greene street to the furnishing rooms of Brown & Son, but the time that she was absent seemed very short to Amy, and was very brief; when she



came back she came alone, bringing a big bundle that must be hidden away till Christmas.

They had bought the coat and paid for it. But Maria had borrowed her money, and was in debt for it to Stephen Rider! A thing that was hardly to be expected of Maria.

## XVI.

THE reason why Maria was so vexed when Amy asked her a second time about the Christmas present for her father, was, that on asking Miss Butler for three dollars, she found, to her surprise and dismay, that so far from Miss Butler's being in debt to her for service, she herself owed more than she had paid for. It was the bonnet, and the cloak, and the ribbon, this thing and that, she could read the charge with her own eyes, if memory would not serve her! She felt a good deal of dismay when she found how these things stood on the books of debt and credit, but it was not difficult for Maria to explain the matter to herself. A girl couldn't serve in Miss Butler's shop in the dress of a beggar. She couldn't sit in Miss Butler's pew in church with a shabby bonnet on her head. The only extravagance of which



Maria could accuse herself of was the bonnet ribbon she had bought for Amy! And she accused herself of that!

At last she said to herself that a poor girl could not be expected to do any great things at making Christmas presents. It was a very, very little while since she began to earn anything. Her grandfather would be perfectly willing to wait for his present. He wouldn't expect a gift; he wouldn't like it if they spent their money on him that way. It only would remind him how helpless he was. He wouldn't thank them if they took their wages to buy him a new coat!

But, though, when Maria said this to herself, she said it as if the matter were now arranged, and there was no more to be done about it, you know of course it was not settled to her mind. The nearer Christmas drew the more unsettled she became. One night this thought flashed upon her, that on this Christmas, for the first time in her life, she had the power out of her own earnings to prove her gratitude and love for her grandfather. What if she



*had* spent her money? That did not change the fact that she was *earning* money, and that had she not spent it on herself she should have had it to spend on him!

This thought tormented her. She could not shut it out of her head any more than Adam could help hearing God's voice in the Garden. Before she had got rid of this thought the subject of the sleigh ride came up!

And the dinner!

Miss Butler expected all the girls to dine with her on Christmas day, when she gave them a feast. And Jane Rice, with Miss Butler's consent, had invited all the hands in the work-rooms and the show-room to go with her to her father's house in the country. The sleighing was excellent; there would be the full moon to light them; and what could be more splendid than the idea! Miss Butler volunteered to furnish a large sleigh that would carry them all. Such a Christmas as they looked forward to could not come but once a year, you may be sure.

But how was Maria going to manage all these



things—the dinner and the ride? Amy and her grandfather expected her to spend the holiday with them. It was clear that, at whatever cost, she must bear her part in the gift-giving.

Finally she thought of Stephen Rider; he could help her out of her trouble, and accordingly she went in search of him. He was not hard to find.

When she saw him standing at the corner, where he usually stationed himself as the day waned, she looked as if she were very much surprised to find him there, and passed by him in great haste; but she had not gone very far when her pace slackened, she looked behind her, and after a few hesitating steps turned boldly back in the direction whence she came.

Stephen was watching Maria all this while. He was thinking what a fine-looking figure she made in her handsome clothes. In her handsome clothes, I said. Do I mean by that, that Maria was arrayed this winter in very great splendor, or, like some of the ladies who come out from their dressing-rooms to loiter up and down the pavements, as idle as the idlest



and most useless things that were ever seen on earth ; a shame to their father's house ? No. But Stephen had never worn any but the coarsest garments himself. If he was not in rags, it was because his mother never ceased from patching ; and there was such a contrast in these days between the girls, and the gay colors Maria put on lighted up her showy face in such a way that it was no great wonder if he thought her magnificent, and hardly knew that there was a difference between her attire and that of the gayest lady in Hamilton. He stopped whistling as she came near, and wondered whether she would speak to him, for sometimes she passed by as if she did not see him, when he felt sure she did. He felt quite awed for a moment as he looked at Maria, till she said, so friendly, and as if she were conferring a great favor upon him,

“Stephen, you are the very one I was looking for. I want to borrow a little money of you. Have you any you can lend me a few days as well as not ?”

“Guess so, Maria,” said Stephen, taking out



his old leather pocket-book. It was the same one he had carried since he first began peddling in the streets. "How much do you want?"

"Three dollars." Stephen looked up at her, in his quick, shrewd way; he wondered if she were really in earnest. Then, seeing that she was, without asking any questions, he drew out a bank bill and gave it to her.

"Can you spare it?" said Maria. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," said he, in his manly way, clasping the old pocket-book and restoring it to his pocket. "Do you want any more?"

"No, indeed. And I shall pay this back in no time. I mean, just as soon as Miss Butler pays me what I've earned."

"Well," said Stephen, "don't be alarmed. I an't in a hurry." And Maria felt easier when she heard him say it, for now she knew that she might take her time about paying him.

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you, Stephen," said she. "Are you doing a good business now?"

"Never better ; never so good."

"That's what you always said, ever since I can recollect. You must be getting rich."

"Oh, yes—*very*."

"You will be, any way."

"Oh, you've turned fortune-teller, Maria ! Well, I'll believe in all the good luck you've a mind to promise me. How are you getting on yourself?"

"Fine. I like it very well. I shall have better wages by and by."

"Is it coming true what the old woman told ? You remember ?"

"That nonsense ! I've forgotten all about it," said Maria. But she had not forgotten.



## XVII.

THE next evening, after the purchase of the coat, it was Christmas Eve, you remember, Maria came home again, with permission to remain all night.

When they were alone, Amy took advantage of the first moment, and said,

“Now we must arrange about the dinner tomorrow—what we shall have, and what time we shall have it.”

“Won’t you have it at the usual hour?” asked Maria. She didn’t look at Amy when she asked it, but stooped down to stroke the back of the old tom-cat, lying in a corner of the hearth.

“I don’t know,” said Amy. “Shall we? Just what hour you like best. There’s one good long day we can manage to suit ourselves. There isn’t a single hour, from nine o’clock in the morning till six at night, that we can’t have our dinner, if we choose.”

"There's always something to pay," said Maria, apparently very much vexed. "I won't be here to dinner, and I'm so sorry—you don't know."

"Not be here, Maria! you won't! Oh, Maria! father will be so disappointed: he has talked about it over and over again."

"Has he? I'm very sorry. Just think of that! sorry that he wants me! I don't mean that; but I *am* sorry to disappoint him. But I can't help myself. There's no use of crying over it. Miss Butler is very particular about some things. If she makes any arrangements, she won't have them interfered with. When she says there's a thing she would like to have done, the girls all know what she means by it; they wouldn't, any of them, dare to do different; and I can't, if I mean to stay in her house."

"I know," said poor Amy, ready to burst into tears, but pushing back the sorrow, that she might put forth the argument, "but I'm *sure* if you should remind Miss Butler about father, and how few holidays we have and can



spend together, I'm sure, Maria, if you told her, or if you'd let me, she would be willing you should come home."

"Well, now, suppose all the rest of the girls should get up an excuse—"

"Get up an excuse!" exclaimed Amy hastily. "Do you call it an *excuse*? I don't; but it's a good *reason*.' You don't get it up either, it's right here on hand. If she should come and look at father, I guess she'd understand us quick enough—we shouldn't have to beg very hard to get you off."

"That shows that you don't know anything about it, said Maria. "She wouldn't let me off, and I'm not going down on my knees to beg it of her."

For a good many minutes not a word was exchanged between the girls. At last, said Amy:

"Well then, Maria, let us know what hour your dinner is—we can change ours, you know. We can put it off quite late, if you say so. Father wouldn't care. And it would be very pretty and pleasant to have lights on the table.



We could make it bright and cheerful, and then we shouldn't be in a hurry to get through. And in the evening may be Stephen and his mother will come in for a little while. And I wouldn't wonder a bit if Mr. Spingler came. He comes so often."

Maria laughed outright.

"What a delightful picture to be sure—you do choose the queerest company!" said she. "No, no, Amy; don't you think another bit about me. Just go on, and have your dinner at the time grandpa' likes it, and I'll explain it to him that I *can't* come, and he understands better than you seem to do about these people who employ working hands. It's very kind of Miss Butler, though, to be at the trouble of getting up a great dinner, and you know this is my first year there. How queer it would look if I couldn't stay when I've dined home ever and ever so many Sundays."

"Well, but that sounds as if you were going to keep on eating all day long. Won't you ever be through from noon till dark?"

"Why—don't you know—didn't I tell you?"



Have I got to make you miserable all over again?" exclaimed Maria.

"What do you mean, Maria?" said Amy, the words seemed to choke her—could this be Christmas Eve,—the time that is generally so crowded with joyful expectations for the morrow?—it was only crowded with disappointment for Amy.

"Why, I can't come home to-morrow at all—not even after the dinner! I have got to go home with Jane Rice; all the girls are going. She lives in the country, you know, and her sister's wedding is to-morrow night, and we are all invited. Miss Butler furnishes the sleigh, and the horses, and driver. Oh, how I wish there was room enough for you, Amy!"

"I couldn't go," said Amy, bitterly.

"You'd find out you could, if there was only a place I could tuck you in," said Maria.

"I wouldn't go, anyway, and leave father."

"Oh, well, perhaps you wouldn't! But now, Amy, see here, don't you know this is all your own getting up, making so much about Christmas and the dinner, and having me here? I



know it's all kind, and pleasant, and just exactly right, as far as you're concerned—you're always in the right, you know, and I never was, for a single minute in my life, and never expect to be ; but grandfather never used to think so very much about Christmas day, that I remember."

"What of that?" said Amy.

"Well, now, you're getting fierce! I only meant that you're putting him up to expect a great deal more pleasure out of to-morrow than I ever heard of his expecting before."

Harsh words rushed to Amy's lips ; angry thoughts were in her heart ; but she paused before she spoke them, and in that brief moment, as she looked at Maria, her wrath passed away. She seemed to see Miss Dix in the shadows of the room, and one beside Miss Dix, who made the darkness light ; and they, her best human and best divine friends, waited for her words. What, then, should she say to Maria ?

"You are away so much, you forget how great little things seem to him, when he can't get about and do any work that would help



him to forget how miserably off he is. Oh, Maria! you don't know how glad I was when he got so interested thinking about the Christmas dinner and arranging what we should have, and talking about having you home. But it isn't your fault either—you have so much work to do, and you see so many people."

"He used to get us Christmas presents, too, when I was here sometimes in the holidays," said Maria, softened by Amy's words, and still more by her manner of speaking them, for it was gentle, and full of kindness.

"I knew you couldn't forget that," said Amy, "how he used to fill the stockings we would leave hanging from the mantle-shelf—and how we used to run down stairs in the dark, to this very room, and carry them back to bed with us. It was as much as we could do to wait till morning for light enough to see our treasures."

"Yes," said Maria, "I wish everything was just as it used to be! How different it was."

"Before you came," said Amy, "this is



what makes Christmas such a solemn time to him and me—the very last Christmas mother was here—though she was so sick, so low, she remembered to ask him if he knew it was Christmas Eve. I heard her as I was going away to bed, and I heard him say, ‘Oh, yes!’ and he called me back to hang up my stocking. She put in the presents herself, he told me afterwards; but when I came down in the morning it wasn’t to get my stocking, it was to see her! She was dying, Maria. . . . He always reminds me of it every Christmas day, and says, ‘don’t forget her Amy,’ as if I ever could.”

“Of course you never could,” said Maria. “I never shall forget her either. Grandma’ was always so kind to me when I came here for a visit.”

“How happy it used to be! . . . I think he will have a good time to-morrow, though, for he said this morning something I haven’t heard him say very often, Maria.”

“What did he say, Amy?”

Amy answered in a low voice, “Bless the



Lord, O my soul, and praise Him for all his benefits."

This conversation made Maria feel too sad. She wanted to break it up, so she lighted a lamp and walked about the room, carrying the lamp with her, and at last she opened the door of the cupboard in the corner.

"What's this!" she exclaimed, looking within—"a tart! Why, who made that?"

"That's a surprise," said Amy.

"Who made it, though? *You* didn't?"

"Yes; don't it look quite respectable?"

"Quite! I should think so. It's beautiful . . . crimped edges and all. Why, Amy! And there is the turkey, too."

"Isn't it a funny little one?"

"Tender as a chicken and just big enough. It won't take forever to cook it. You must baste it well. I wish—" but whatever her wish might be, Maria did not express it. Perhaps for a single minute she wished that she could find it possible to renounce the great dinner, the sleigh-ride, and the wedding, and spend to-morrow in the old, dull house, down the lane!

## XVIII.

“MERRY Christmas!”

How many million-voices spoke these words at sunrise! How many millions more whose voices are dumb, whose lips are cold, *have* spoken them—your forefathers and mine—the loves of your heart and mine! How they have borne the song of the angels from generation to generation. And One who sits now at the right hand of God, exalted, our Saviour, he has heard all the song and the shouting: “Good will to man!” Be merry, be glad, for He who is our gladness and our life has appeared, has taken away the darkness, has subdued the death, and the world has swung free from its curse under the Hand that was nailed to the Cross of Pilate; the Hand that was laid on children’s heads to bless them; the Hand that touched the world’s leprosy and healed it; the



Hand that Mary held when the little ONE walked by her side while he was growing in grace and in favor with God and man; the Hand that broke the Bread that sustains the life of every penitent creature; the Hand that knocks at the door of the human heart, and says, "Open to me; I will come in and make my abode with thee."

"Merry Christmas!" What streams of gold have poured forth to make the Christmas bright! And all for love! And this love called out by God's love, how sacred it becomes in such connection! How shall we prove our gratitude to God so well as in the manifesting of our love to those around us? "GOOD WILL TO MAN!" Take up the song, and let the song of the heart be the law of the life.

*"Merry Christmas!"*

Who spoke?

There was not a sound in the house. The voice came from outside—from out of doors, where it was almost as still, for the sun had but just risen.



It was Stephen Rider, of course, who spoke. He was making one swift circuit of the cottage before he ran down to the station.

They all heard the greeting in the house.

Mr. Herbert heard it. He had wakened early, and was dreaming till he wakened. And of what was he dreaming? That he stood with the fireman of the EAGLE, his favorite engine, on the platform, talking about the capital time they were making.

It was a fine winter morning, clear, bright, and very cold. He must swing his arms now and then and stamp his feet to keep the blood in good circulation. How beautiful the winter fields looked under their covering of white and frozen snow! How splendid were the trees, coated, branch and twig, with frost; all the diamonds in the world hung on one of these elms could not have made it shine so gloriously, as *all* the trees of the forest shone, when the sunlight fell upon them.

"Splendid skating!" he says to the fireman, as they fly past the black swamp ponds. They run through the villages without pause, for



this, you understand, is the express train that takes notice only of the large towns.

By and by he sees the tall spires of the city churches. He has brought hundreds of passengers, who trusted their lives in their hands, to the very doors of home, and he also is at home.

That leap from the engine platform, just as Stephen shouted, wakened him.

Ah! . . . He is old Herbert, indeed. . . . But—that was such a leap as he shall never make again.

An instant since he was Herbert the engineer, strong, hale, the safest man on the line, Now he is Herbert the cripple, lying in his bed, where he has lain wishing many times that he lay in his grave instead.

Wishing that this morning? No; yesterday he said, and Amy heard him, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!" And that song, though it left his lips, did not leave his heart also. The heart can sing it yet.

Oh, to think of the thousands like him,  
12\*



whose Christmas is not *merry*, yet is resigned and thankful !

What victory can be compared with the soul's victory over the world, when it submits to the will of God, and in the valley of death looks for light to the star of Bethlehem !

"*Merry Christmas !*" Amy heard it.

She had already kindled a fire in the stove, and was sweeping the kitchen, though it was very early, for Mr. Herbert still continued in the practice of that habit of early rising he had formed when his days were brimfull of activity.

Before she came out of the bedroom Amy left on the coverlet, under Maria's hand, a little paper parcel ; it was wrapped in Maria's stocking.

This was a gift for Maria. A pair of undersleeves knit of bright soft wools to keep Maria's arms warm ; for Amy had noticed how much she seemed to feel the cold since she wore those open sleeves.

Miss Dix showed her how to knit them ; and, considering that Amy was not practiced in such work, her success was quite remarkable ; the



sleeves were very well shaped, and the knitting quite even ; and there were the sleeves ! nobody could tell what an amount of comfort was hid in them.

Mr. Herbert had watched their growth with constant interest, for he was in Amy's secret, and shared her anticipations of Maria's satisfaction in the gift. Amy had been a long while about them. You know how such things are made, how she guarded against surprises ; how she seized on every spare moment ; how happy she was when she saw that the work she had undertaken with a good deal of doubt, and continued with a good deal of anxiety, was going to result in sure success. You know how she discovered that the knitting would take a great deal more wool than she imagined ; and that she bought skein after skein, till it seemed as if she would never have done, and that she said to herself, if she had known how much the sleeves were going to cost, very likely she would never have undertaken them ; and you understand how glad she was when finally they were done, that she *had* undertaken them, and count-



ed the cost of them no more, for joy of the thought that Maria would not feel the cold now nearly so much, nor shiver so much, as she had done from her bare arms, since the winter set in.

And while she kindled the fire and swept the kitchen, Amy was all the time hearkening—moving about so noiselessly, and hearkening for some sound in the bed-room that should tell of Maria's awaking.

By and by, as the breakfast hour drew near, not hearing any sound, she went and opened the bedroom door, and behold there was no Maria!

The window stood open and she had gone.

Amy stood there in the middle of the room aghast, looking around her in dumb amazement. While she stood there Maria passed by the window, and seeing Amy, called out,

“What are you doing in there?”

“I'm looking for you,” said Amy. “Where are you?”

“Scolding Santa Claus. I had to come out into the yard to do it. I was going to get back



the way I went out, but now you may as well unlock the kitchen door and let me in."

"It's unlocked, Maria," said Amy.

So Maria came in at the door. She had dressed herself in the sleeves she found on her bed, and now began to exhibit them :

"Stockings for my arms !" she said, "what do you think of them ?"

"They look comfortable," said Amy, as if she had never seen them before.

"Do they ? I suppose that's what they were made for."

"No great beauty about them, though," said Amy.

"You're jealous because you haven't any ; that's what's the matter of *you*. Santa Claus and I think they're beautiful."

"Did he have on his spectacles when he said so ?"

"It must have taken you a great while to make them, Amy. What *did* you do it for ?"

"You had better ask Santa Claus ; he probably knows more about that than I do."

"Miss Dix showed you how, I suppose. I



never saw a prettier stitch. But it must have taken ever so much worsted."

"Where have you been, Maria?"

"Trying the sleeves in the air, to see if they're good for anything; and they are, I find. When you see Mr. Santa Claus again, give him that for me."

Maria came up to Amy and kissed her, and at the same time gave her a little book.

"He's got to learn that book by heart," said she, "tell him I say so;" and so saying, Maria went into the bedroom and left her shawl and bonnet.

When she came out again Amy stood looking at the little book, turning the pages over and over, and on every page there was a hymn. No gift could have pleased her as well, and Maria understood that when she saw how smiling her face was.

"I forgot it last night," said she, as she came up to Amy and looked over her shoulder; "did you ever hear of anything like that? and that's what I went out for to get it. Now we must take out grandfather's coat."



Amy kissed the book and laid it on the mantle-shelf, and they now busied themselves in preparing breakfast, and in helping their grandfather out to it, and in giving him his splendid Christmas present, and in cheering him up when he seemed disposed to look at them rather sadly, and to speak of himself as a burden, and to shed tears indeed over the new coat.

They succeeded in bringing two or three broad smiles to his face while they were at breakfast, and I don't suppose that he thought as lightly of Maria's assurance, that he never had looked so young and handsome, as he pretended to do.

She was very gay at the breakfast, telling a great many things that had happened in the shop, and about the queer customers they sometimes had, but nothing about the Christmas dinner or the wedding party. She left that for Amy to attend to. She wanted her to manage it after she should be gone, but Amy said,

"Why, Maria, what if father shouldn't like it."

"He won't care! You can tell him, and of



course he won't care. He'll see that I can't help it."

"Yes, but he won't see how you could help talking with him about it. You don't belong to Miss Butler quite as much as you belong to him."

"Pshaw, what a notion that is!" said Maria. But by and by she came to Amy and said,

"Tell him!" and after that she sat down beside her grandfather, and nodded at Amy to go on. Amy understood what this meant,—that Maria would not tell him herself, and expected her to intercede. So she said,

"Father, you must make the most of Maria, for you'll lose her pretty soon. Miss Butler wants her to come over there and dine."

"Miss Butler! Christmas?"

"She gets up a great dinner and wants all the hands," said Maria. "Did you ever hear anything so stupid?"

"Well, I suppose it's her way," said Mr. Herbert, "we can have *our* Christmas any time, though. We won't interfere with Miss Butler."

"I wouldn't mind," began Maria, "but"



“ Oh, well, you mustn't put any buts in the way ; we must accommodate ourselves to our circumstances, girls, if they won't accommodate themselves to us ; I find that's the true way to get on comfortably in this world. If a thing is allowed to take place that you didn't expect, and wouldn't have had happen for all the world, if you could have prevented it, why, accommodate yourself to it, and you will be helped through—you will certainly be helped through ! When you are about to shed your old coat, somebody will be sure to have a new one on hand for you ! That somebody is Providence, girls. He works by human instruments, and I hold He has employed you two to look after me ! I'm suited with the choice He has made of my helpers.”

So he rambled on ; and he had got a good way from the thing that Maria began to say, but did not intend to finish. She was now looking at Amy in a way that instructed Amy she was to continue the conversation. So Amy said,

“ If you are suited, father, it's the great thing



that Maria and I want. What could we ever wish for so much as to make you comfortable and easy about everything, and do everything to please you. Maria wanted me to tell you the worst part of it ; she can't come home to stay with us a bit to-day. She's got to go on a ride after dinner ; they want to have her ; one of the girls is going to take the rest to her father's in the country, her sister is going to be married, and if you say yes, Maria is going too."

"Is that it?" said Mr. Herbert, looking at Maria.

Maria, who had not thought it necessary to ask consent, here looked at her grandfather and said,

"What shall I do?"

"Why," said he, "when I was young we made a great deal of a sleighride in the country. You don't get many chances ; I'd be sorry if you couldn't go. You can come and talk with us any other evening—Saturday—and then we'll have our merry Christmas night. Anyway, we have *begun* the day well all together."



So that affair was well settled, and Maria went off with a clear conscience ; they had smiled so kindly on her pleasant prospects.

The Christmas that began with a disappointment for Amy did not end with one. The visitors who could best enliven the day came one after another to visit the engineer. Many a gift they brought that should make housekeeping easy for weeks and weeks to come. And Stephen came with his mother—not least welcome of guests—and at last came Mr. Spingler. He remained with them through the evening. I shall not repeat all he said ; there was one sentence he dropped, however, as he was going away, which I cannot forbear recording. He said, “ Mr. Herbert, I’ve been a long while making up my mind about Stephen, but, I’ve finally come to a decision ; but you must let me keep my secret a little longer. I think you’ll approve of the way I’ve settled him, sir. I think you’ll approve of it. If you don’t, it will all fall through.”

## XIX.

MARIA did not come home again till the Sunday after Christmas, and then if the choice had been given her she would have chosen not to come.

This great day of pleasure had done anything except prepare the way for pleasure. Maria had been sick and miserable all this while. She took a bad cold on the sleighride, and had been suffering from it ever since, trying to keep up and about her work, but growing more and more ill every day until Sunday, when Miss Butler sent her home with instructions to remain there until she was recovered.

It was many and many a day before the influenza broke up; and a great time of worry and impatience, and of counting the hours that must pass before she should be able to go back to the shop.

One evening Miss Butler came and insisted



on sending a doctor. He attended Maria for several days in succession. Twice or thrice the girls came down from the shop ; but these visits did not serve to reconcile her to her sickness, neither did they increase her patience. She was, I am sorry to say, no great comfort to her grandfather in these days. Everything troubled her. The visits of the doctor, for there was another debt accumulating : the visits of the girls, who would be sure to look at the old house precisely as she now looked at it, since she had become accustomed to the fine furniture of Miss Butler's show-rooms.

Then it was so stupid to try and keep up a conversation with her grandfather, and see him falling asleep when she was thinking that she had made herself agreeable to him. And how many times must she listen to the old stories he told, and pretend that they were new to her ?

In addition to all these annoyances, there was the influenza that kept her a wretched prisoner. Cough ! cough ! from morniu<sup>g</sup> till night ; and it was worse from night till morn-



ing. Not one of the girls, beside herself, had paid such a price for the Christmas ride.

One day she had a fright.

Stephen Rider came into the kitchen and brought a newspaper for her grandfather, and asked her how she was getting on with her cold. Now he was in the habit of running in on such an errand almost every day, for he took it upon himself to supply Mr. Herbert with the news ; and he had several times come into the kitchen since Maria was staying at home. But the instant she now saw him, she thought of the money she had borrowed of him, and imagined that had her grandfather been asleep, he would have asked her about it.

Nothing in fact was farther from his thought. But how relieved she felt when he was actually gone ! She set about reading the newspaper the moment he closed the door, and when her grandfather fell asleep she sat and listened to the ticking of the clock, and resolved that in two days at the farthest she would go back to the shop.

She was obliged to put it off for two days,



for she knew it was impossible for her to go to-morrow. Nobody would have listened to it ; besides, she did not feel able to go. But oh, to be back in the work-room with the girls ! to be in the show-room among the ladies ! to look out in the busy street and see the sleighs and the buffalo-robcs, and the furs and the velvets, the satins and all the gay colors !

From thinking of these things, it was not so very strange that she should begin to dream again over the words of the old fortune-teller ; and when she was on that ground of enchantment, it was no surprise that she should bethink her of the looking-glass hanging over Amy's table, and go in to survey herself ! And so from one thing to another, to get rid of her tiresome self and of time, that hung so heavy on her hands, at last Maria began looking through and arranging the drawers of the old bureau which had been her grandmother's and her mother's, and was now used by Amy. Amy kept her trinkets and her best clothes there, but there was room for a great deal beside. No large space was required to hold all our



Amy's worldly goods, and the various holiday gifts she had received from year to year, which were here preserved with care, for the sake of the memories attached to each. These things, clothes, books, boxes and baskets, were all arranged in order there, and in one corner separate from the rest was the box Amy called her savings bank.

Looking at this relic and that, Maria finally took the savings bank in her hand. You have seen such a tin box, painted red, with a hole in the roof, where the money could be dropped in, and a trap-door underneath, with a tiny lock to it. And there in the corner lay the key, just where the box had stood.

Maria was curious to know how much money Amy had in her bank ; and she turned the key in the lock, and the contents dropped into her hand. Copper, silver, gold, and a bank note.

Maria was astonished. She looked at the note—three dollars! No wonder Amy, the miser! felt rich enough to make Christmas presents. How in the world had she managed to save all this money? To be sure, all told,



the sum amounted only to seven dollars ; and if she had been as prudent as Amy had been, Maria would by that time have laid up double that amount ; but it seemed to her as she looked at the money, it was no injustice to call Amy a miser. Who would have believed that she could have hoarded all this sum, and never even mentioned it to her !

Here was enough to pay that hateful debt Maria owed to Stephen. This thought finally took hold of her and it would not let her go again.

Where would be the harm if she borrowed this sum of three dollars of Amy, and paid Stephen without saying anything to Amy about it ? Of course as soon as she came home Amy must know. If she were only here now, Maria would be glad ; but she was not here, and there was Stephen in the yard, and oh, to be rid of the hateful debt to him ! the debt that made her feel like a guilty coward whenever she saw the lad ! A few minutes of such reflections, and Maria had opened the window and called to Stephen, who was chopping wood.



"Did you think you would never get your maney back?" said she, when he came to the window.

"Why, no, indeed," said he, "I never thought anything about it."

"Well, here it is," said she. "You're a good fellow, Steph. I'll recommend you for a money-lender, if I hear of anybody in need. . . . Did you ever say anything about my having it?"

Maria hesitated before she asked this question. She was almost certain of the way Stephen would take it.

"*Say* anything about it!" cried he, almost angrily.. "No, indeed. What for? It's only your business and mine."

"Of course. I know you wouldn't. I don't know why I asked you. You're very kind. I'm very much obliged to you. I musn't stand here with this window open, though. Is your mother any better, Stephen?"

"She's just the same," he answered. "When are you going back to the shop, Maria?"

"Next Monday, I hope, if I live. Maybe I'll go to-morrow. I could, if they wanted me.





"WELL, HERE IT IS, SAID SHE."







Oh, you don't know how tired I am of doing nothing."

"It's kind o' dull, I expect, down here in this lane, after the shop over yonder. I wouldn't like it myself, day in and out."

"No ; you wouldn't, would you ?"

"But, then, it won't hurt you to take a little breathing time," said he.

"That's well for *you* to say," she answered, "when you never take a day for enjoying yourself, like other folks."

"I couldn't afford to pay as high a price as some do for a day of pleasure," was Stephen's answer, as he walked off to the shed ; and Maria closed the window with a noise that made him smile. He took up his axe and went to work again. "She might have stayed at home, then," said he to himself. "She might have helped Amy keep Christmas, with old Mr. Herbert."

## XX.

MONDAY morning came, and, according to her hope, it found Maria able to go back to her work.

But she had said nothing to Amy about the money borrowed from the savings bank.

It was her intention to tell Amy immediately on her return, but various things prevented her ; so that it slipped from her mind until bed-time came. Then, indeed, they were alone together, and nothing to hinder as full an explanation as Maria chose to make. But Amy was tired and sleepy. Maria said to herself, "No use of exciting her by repeating all this story." True, it was easily enough told. She had merely need to say that she chose to be in debt to Amy, rather than to Stephen ; and in a very few days she should have earned double the money. It was easy to go even further, and explain, that the clothes she had been



obliged to furnish herself, in order to present a respectable appearance in the shop, had taken all her earnings; and when the coat was talked about, she preferred to borrow the money of little Stephen, rather than of any of the hands in Miss Butler's shop; easy enough to tell these truths; but Maria found it easier yet to keep silent in regard to all of them. So she kept silent.

She chose now that Amy should make her own discovery of her loss. If it happened while she was at home, well and good, thought Maria. They would have a little fun over Amy's fright. That would be a capital joke, indeed!

But it did not happen while she was at home. It nearly happened. Amy had a shilling in her pocket on Saturday evening, and this she transferred to the savings bank, and would have counted over the money for Maria's edification, if it had not been so late; and for the thought, beside, that Maria might suppose she was making some display of her riches. She hesitated over that thought for a moment,



and concluded it might be more generous to say nothing about it until Maria was able to go to work again. This was what saved Maria from the opportunity of making an explanation that Saturday evening.

Now, Maria had occupied this bureau with Amy, and on Monday afternoon Amy was putting her special drawer in order again, when she opened the savings bank, and saw that it had been robbed.

At first she could not believe her eyes ; it seemed incredible that the bank-note was gone, and she began to search for it. Of course we know that she must search in vain ; but she could not believe it. She looked everywhere, in probable and improbable places. You know how people go through such a search—how it would seem to her—she had seen that bank note everywhere, and left it everywhere ! and having looked everywhere, would begin the search over again. In this way she went on till it was necessary that she should be about some other work.

She was sitting in the evening very discon-



solately before the stove. She had been knitting, but the work had dropped from her hands. One of Mr. Herbert's old friends was sitting with him. Herbert was reading the paper, while the neighbor smoked his pipe ; and Stephen, who had brought the newspaper, was now bringing in an armful of wood. He went off and brought it without explaining his intentions, or asking if he should : for Amy looked so disturbed, he could not go away until he had an opportunity of speaking with her.

When he had filled the wood-box, he came and stood by the stove.

"What's the matter, Amy," said he.

"Nothing," she answered.

"Are you lonesome, because Maria is gone?" he asked, for he was certain something *was* the matter, and she must not expect him to believe to the contrary, as long as she kept that countenance.

Amy, looking at Stephen, strove hard to say, in a quiet, natural way,

"It's nothing, Stephen, really ;" but she



failed. She said it in such a way that he immediately was convinced that it was something very serious.

"You don't look that way, Amy, when there's nothing the matter," said he. "Maybe I can help you out of it. Shall I go somewhere for you?"

"I don't want anything, thank you, Stephen," said Amy; and she hesitated about speaking further, but finally she said, "I had some money I had laid aside, and I can't find it. I've been looking, and looking."

"I've often had that happen," said Stephen, "but it always turns up again, almost always, in some odd place, and then I remember that I put it there."

"That's what I said to myself: it would come to light; but I can't think it likely. I *know* where I put it, and it isn't there. I know I haven't ever taken it out again, for I should remember doing it. Besides, I haven't had any need for it. I kept it in a little box.'

"And is the box there, all right?"

"Yes, just where I've always kept it."



"Haven't you been buying something, and forgot?"

"No, I know I haven't; for I had enough money without taking that. I was going to keep it for something."

"How much was it, Amy?"

"Three dollars."

Stephen's eyes flashed; he looked astonished.

"A bill?" he said, in his quick, eager way.

"Ho! ho!"

"Yes; it was a bill."

"Wouldn't know it if you saw it again, would you?" said he.

"Yes, I would; for it was a new one, I remember. I know what faces there were on it, and the picture. There was a river, and a fall in it?"

"Is that it?" asked Stephen; and he showed Amy the note Maria gave him.

"It's just exactly like it," said she.

"Then it's yours; and you've got it back again already, before you knew it, haven't you? Now you mustn't look so solemn, will you, Amy?"

Amy looked at him amazed.

"Don't you ask me a single question," said he. "I won't tell you where I got it. I can't. But I'll tell you that when I took it, I said to myself, I'll keep that bill, for I thought I'd hear from it again; and so you see I kept it. Don't be afraid I'll lose anything by that. I never felt as if it was mine. But I'll *have* mine. So don't you worry about me."



## XXI.

THE next time Maria came home she heard all this story. Amy told it to her. It was a wonderful tale to Amy. Many were the questions Maria asked about it, as they talked together in the dark. Stephen, it seemed, from all she heard, had not betrayed her.

Stephen saw Maria when she went home. He saw her, also, when she was on her way back to the shop, and he followed her.

Walking on in his rapid way, at a half run, it was not long ere he had overtaken her.

"Did Amy tell you about it?" said he, when he was walking by Maria's side.

Maria was angry at his boldness, and said, shortly,

"What?"

"About her loss."

"What's that?"

"Why, of the money she lost. Three dollars, you know."

"Yes, to be sure she did. She said she had missed them out of a box where she keeps her money. What of it?"

"What do *you* think about it?"

"Why, she mislaid it, of course, somewhere."

"No, she didn't. Did she tell you I'd give her the money back?"

"Yes," said Maria, with reluctance, and with yet more of pride.

"Well, you know, Maria, it was the same bill you gave me the other day."

"How do I know it?"

"How? well enough, I guess."

"You've given her back the money because you say it was hers—or she does—or some way you've managed it. Have I got to pay you over again? I'd like to know."

"What do you think about that? I don't wear blinders on my eyes. Do you want me to tell Amy I got that bill of you?"

"I don't care what you tell. But I dare say I ought to pay back double for every cent I have borrowed of any one."



Just as you like to put it," said Stephen. "I don't care."

"Well," said she, "I shall pay you, because I don't want Amy to lose her money."

"Thank you, Maria. But Amy isn't a loser, you know. She's got her money back. As for me—whenever you are ready. I'm in no hurry for the money. Mind that."

But Maria said,

"'Twill be paid the first minute I can get the money. You may be sure of that."

And so Stephen left her, and Maria went her way to the shop alone.

And he, the little lad she despised so much, *he* might, if he chose—indeed, how could he help it?—he might think of her as a thief? Why should he not? had she not proved to be one?

For it was now much too late to go back and say what was true the other day, that she had only borrowed the money of Amy.

She *did* but borrow it at the first, though without permission.

You see how by one misstep and another she



had come to occupy this miserable position ; how though she had not intended to be a thief, she actually stood in the place of one ; and to all intents was one.

And because Stephen Rider knew this hateful business through and through, and she could not condescend to explain it to the boy, she hated him. And because she was afraid, yes, actually afraid of meeting him, she now came home as seldom as possible.

Work pressed in the shop ; it was easy to say that. All the hands were busy ; and this was really true. She must make up by diligence and attention for the time she had lost. There was certainly need enough that she should be earning wages. All these things she said to Amy by way of explanation ; and Amy must yield to Maria's necessity. And Mr. Herbert understood it, at least he thought he did. "Tend to business first, child," he would say ; "do your duty by Miss Butler. Amy and I are getting on first-rate. We mustn't disappoint those that employ us ; we must come up to their expectations or quit the service."



But did these words make Maria feel less like a slave? She had really in these days no liberty. Afraid of Stephen Rider! You would not have seen anything so very terrible in him had you but looked at poor little Stephen. But the Eye of Truth in the head of the merest child may well be a terror to the strongest false heart that beats.

## XXII.

ONE evening Stephen Rider ran up Miss Butler's steps, threw open her shop door, and stood in the glare of the gas-light looking about him, not in the least dismayed, but evidently searching with his eager eyes for somebody whom he had expected to see the moment he opened the door.

A young girl who was waiting in the shop came forward, and asked him what he wanted, in a way that seemed intended to remind him that he had better be off, for evidently he had got into the wrong place by mistake. Indeed, it did not seem likely that Stephen could have any business to transact there.

Stephen was too hurried and too anxious to heed or to hear the way the little girl spoke to him ; he said,

"I want Maria Twist. Don't she work here ? Isn't she in ?"



"Jenny, call Maria," said the young lady, and she went back to the counter and looked at some work she had there unfinished.

When Maria came in she called to her, and said,

"There's something down by the door that has asked for you. Don't be frightened ; I guess it is a boy ; though he looks more like a scarecrow."

"Why, it's Stephen!" exclaimed Maria, as she went towards the door.

He stood with his hands plunged in his pockets, looking around him with the eyes of a man accustomed to take note, in the most rapid manner, of everything he sees. The surprise and perplexity of the lad as his thoughts became entangled in the midst of those bright colors and soft textures, displayed in the show-cases and along the counter, and on the various tables, passed away, dispelled as by a breath, when he saw Maria standing before him.

"Hurry!" he exclaimed.

"What do you want?" said she. She thought that he wanted his money ; that in some sudden



strait he had run in there, and she must not keep him waiting. It was to be expected that he would do anything, the first thing that happened to come into his mind at the moment he needed the money.

He looked at her when she asked him that way, What he wanted, for one instant looked as if he were astonished, then he said,

"Amy has come home sick. They brought her in a hack. Mr. Herbert wants you to come right away. I got a doctor; and he's there."

That was all he said. Having delivered his message, he turned about and was gone. There was no time to ask a question. He did not intend that she should lose a moment in that way.

Money! it was clear enough that her money was the last thing Stephen thought of at that moment.

Maria went home. No matter what risk she ran, what time she lost, what money she lost, she must go home. Her work must wait, or other hands in the shop there must perform it.



An hour had come to her that comes in turn to all, when the business most urgent must be thrust aside, when the service she liked must be forsaken, when the risks of loss must not for a moment be thought of; there might be occupation and call for her in the work-room, in the show-room, here and there; but in another place there was such a need of her, such a necessity, as made every other claim whatever seem useless and idle.

For when Love calls, though it be out of a silent and darkened room in a little brown cottage down the lane, and with a voice ever so feeble, the great people of the world must stand aside; they must make room for her who is summoned to run from their service; they must not hinder her whatever their necessity may be.

So Maria is at home again.

It is no time now for complaint. And she utters none. It is hardly a time for action; but a time for watching and waiting; for none can foretell the issue of this fever; quiet must be maintained in the house; and rarely you hear a sound except the ticking of the clock,



or the light step that waits on Grandfather Herbert.

This sickness of Amy's, a nervous fever, brought on, the doctor said, by over work and anxiety, continued long ; and during its continuance there were days when those who watched the child looked from hour to hour for the last words she should speak, the last look that should fall upon them from her dying eyes. Do you know how they watched and waited ?

Stephen's mother came into the house and served them as a servant in those days.

There was no rest for Stephen while this house of his friend was in distress. People missed him in many places he was accustomed to frequent day after day ; his most important duties at the various stations were performed, but the smaller matters, which in ordinary seasons he never neglected, were neglected now. *Amy is dying* ; this was the distressing thought he carried with him everywhere ; and many were the secret tears he shed on her ac-



count ; many were the prayers he offered in her behalf. All her kind words and acts were before him ; they were written out in such letters as shone before his eyes ; he never could forget them. He did not know quite what a sister was, but he said to himself Amy came nearest to what he thought a sister might be of anything he had known.

He made himself very helpful about the house in these days. If you could have seen him with Mr. Herbert, waiting on him, you might have thought that neither of them suffered much anxiety ; they only assumed that cheerfulness, because they deemed it their duty to assume it.

Miss Dix was often at the house. There had grown in the woman's heart the tenderest love for Amy ; to hear her talk of the child was enough to bring tears to Mr. Herbert's eyes, and to abase the spirit of Maria to the dust.

"If God should take her to himself," Miss Dix would say, "we might well praise Him for his tender love. For it would be taking our darling away from earth to Heaven. It seems



to me I can think more easily of Amy among the blessed ones of Heaven, than of any person I have ever known. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.* She already walks in white."

Many a night she sat by Amy's bed watching till the day broke. She said she could not sleep if she should go home, so anxious was she to know how Amy fared from hour to hour.

Sometimes at night a voice might have been heard singing in the sick child's room. It was Miss Dix singing in the lowest strain, the softest voice that ever bore song to Heaven.

What words were they she sang? Now it was :

"The Shepherd sought his sheep,  
The Father sought his child;  
They followed me o'er vale and hill,  
O'er deserts waste and wild:  
They found me nigh to death,  
Famished, and faint, and lone,  
They bound me with the bands of love,  
They saved the wandering one!"



And again :

“Where’er I go I’ll tell the story  
Of the Cross, of the Cross;  
In nothing else shall be my glory,  
Save the Cross, save the Cross.  
Yes, this my constant theme shall be,  
Through time and in eternity,  
That Jesus suffered death for me  
On the Cross, on the Cross.”

Or yet again :

“Let sorrow’s rudest tempest blow,  
Each chord on earth to sever,  
Our King says ‘Come,’ and there’s our Home  
Forever ! oh, forever !”

But oftener than all, and above all, that song  
sung round the world by Christian hearts, in  
living and in dying :

“Rock of Ages ! cleft for me !”

Miss Dix could hardly know all she did when  
she sang these songs for Amy, one after an-  
other, sometimes by the hour. What did she ?  
No more than you may do who sing the songs

of Zion, not as exiles, but as in your native land, with harps that were never hung on the willows of Babylon. Songs of triumph and of Christian rejoicing, sing them as you go! The Lord's songs in all lands! For, as Maria heard this singing, her soul trembled towards prayer. And you, chanting his praise, may even thus be about your Father's business!

One evening in the early spring, while the busy robins were chirping to and fro among the great elm branches, making their arrangements for the summer (who that heard could doubt?), Mr. Herbert, Miss Dix, and Maria, sat in Amy's room. Amy, they supposed, was sleeping; but suddenly she looked up and said, addressing Miss Dix, though she noticed with a smile that they all were there,

"Do you remember that picture in the Reader we were folding last?"

"Which picture, dear?"

"The one of the great storm and shipwreck."

Miss Dix could not recall it.

"You put it aside," said Amy; "printed so badly, torn too!"



"Yes." Miss Dix remembered now that there was such a sheet.

"I cut out that picture, Miss Dix, the one of the storm ; do you care ?

"Dear child, no ! I am glad you took it, if you wanted it, for the sheet was good for nothing but waste paper."

"I'm so glad you say so. I thought afterwards, since I have been sick, perhaps I ought not to have taken it. I put it in the hymn-book Maria gave me. Maria, will you get it for Miss Dix ?"

How do you suppose Maria felt when she heard poor Amy confessing so slight a thing as this, and looking so relieved when she had told it ?

She, at least, understood why Amy had spoken as she did ; and when she gave the hymn-book to Miss Dix, it was in her heart to fall down in the presence of them all, and own how heavy was the burden she carried hidden from their sight and their suspicion.

Miss Dix soon found the picture. It was merely a little vignette, which, in turning the



leaves of a book, a great many persons would pass by with merely a glance ; but, you see, it had made an impression upon Amy—indeed it had fairly haunted her—as sometimes the fragment of a song will do, years after you have heard it sung ; as sometimes the fragrance of a flower will do, long after the flower itself has mouldered into dust ; as sometimes the look of a friend, when the eyes of that friend have long been closed in the darkness of the grave.

“Do you see the birds, Miss Dix ?” asked Amy.

“Yes, dear, they are flying low ; it is a dreadful storm.”

“And there’s a sailor overboard clinging to the rope. Will he be saved ?”

“The rope looks like a thread that might snap any moment in the gale,” said Miss Dix.

“Perhaps it is enough to save a life by, though.”

“I had a queer dream about it,” said Amy. “I thought I saw the storm, and there was a passenger carried off the deck by the gale—it wasn’t long after that that the ship began to settle—then I thought the passenger must be



lost. There was only one I thought. But, by and by, as I watched, I could hear the waves—it was just like the roar of cannon—I saw that in the direction the man was carried by the waves there was a rock right in the very midst of the sea, and a tower on top of it, and the tower, perhaps it was a lighthouse, had arms like a cross ; and, at last, the poor fellow was thrown upon the rock by a great wave and saved.”

When Amy ceased speaking, Maria said to herself, “I’m out in such a storm, but I shall be drowned, I guess. I don’t see any rock.”

And, just then, Miss Dix sang in her low, sweet voice :

“Rock of Ages cleft for me !”

And when she had finished, Mr. Herbert said :

“Yes, yes ; that’s so. That was a good dream for us all to remember, Amy. It is a great dream for us to remember, Maria.”

But Maria made answer secretly :

“He doesn’t see me, or care, I’m alone.”  
And she said this to herself, over and over



again she said it, in a helpless, hopeless kind of way. Until in the silence that fell upon them all, the death-like silence of the room, for Amy was now sleeping, her heart and soul suddenly stood up, though she herself sat there so motionless, they stood up and looked as it were through a storm, in wild dismay and fear, and she cried out, "*Lord, save or I perish !*"

It was a cry that never had escaped her heart before. A need she had never understood before, as now she understood it, was upon her, and from *herself*, whom now she feared, she saw that the Lord alone could save her. Drifting along wherever the waves carried her, dashed, torn, breathless, where was the rock of salvation? She saw it not; she could only cry, "Save, Lord, or I perish!"

What other cry than this could the heart of Maria fashion or her lips utter? She cried to Him with whom alone is salvation. She was asking deliverance. And would He not open a way of escape! But in which direction would it lead? Be sure not the way of pride; be sure not in the way she *had* been drifting.



The sinner must pay the penalty of his sin, and Maria could not escape it. Her penalty here was to pay the price of pride and vanity, and *confess* her folly.

It was the hardest thing that could be asked of her. Yet, in the watches of that night, when Amy's life was hanging still as by a thread, she did not count the cost of salvation. She was ready to pay the price !

Oh, Master, to pay the price !

All night Maria was saying to herself :

"If Amy lives till to-morrow, she shall know about the money." . . . And to God, she said, "If Thou wilt save her life, O Lord, I will confess my sin."

And when, in the morning, the doctor said to Mr. Herbert, "the fever is broken, there is nothing now to fear ; good nursing will bring the little one about in a very short time ; nature has the work to do ;" Maria did not forget the midnight vow

## XXIII.

ONE day, during Amy's recovery, Maria was sitting beside her bed, and Amy held her hand.

Nothing had been said yet about the necessity there was of going back to Miss Butler, or the danger there might be of losing her situation by this long absence. Maria, in these days, seemed to have no care but for Amy's comfort; there was never a more faithful nurse than she had proved to be during this long sickness. She seemed to have had no thought of herself; and in this labor of love she had found an exceeding great reward.

Amy had been thinking a great deal about this kindness of Maria, and now she said :

"I didn't think you loved me so well, and I'm sure, Maria, I never knew that I loved you so well. It won't ever be again as it was once with us. What is the reason, I wonder?"



"Because," said Maria, "it was all my fault before. I don't think I knew you. I don't know what was the matter with me, either. If you hadn't lived, Amy, there are a good many things I never could have forgiven myself for."

"I feel exactly so," said Amy. "We were both to blame. We couldn't bear to give up . . . but if we do give up to Jesus, it's easy enough to give up to each other."

"YES," said Maria, in such a way that Amy knew she perfectly agreed with her—not because Amy was feeble—and it would not be safe now to dispute with her; but because Maria believed in her heart with her.

"YES," she said, and that was all. It was enough.

"You don't know what curious things I've thought of since I have been lying here," said Amy, "and how much I've thought about *you*, when I had my eyes shut, and you thought, I dare say, that I was asleep. I wondered whether you would miss me much, when I was carried out of here, and put away, for I thought I should not live. I thought you must be sorry for



awhile, but, perhaps, not very long. It grieved me so to think of you and father here alone. I shall try and make it a great deal pleasanter for you and him, when I am about again."

"You always made it pleasant!" said Maria, speaking very fast, and tears were dropping from her eyes. "Pleasanter than I did! I was always thinking how I'd like to have things for my own comfort, but you were always thinking about grandfather . . . Amy—"

Maria's voice shook so when she pronounced Amy's name, that she could go no further. A moment ago she thought, "I must tell her all, now or never!" Yet she had stumbled, even at the threshold of Amy's heart, and was ready to fall down speechless.

When Amy looked at her, she knew that Maria had yet something more to say, and she held her hand in a firmer clasp, as if to cheer and strengthen her, and she said, "Dear Maria!"

Maria turned and looked at her, as though, for a moment, she supposed that this might be a call; but Amy only smiled. There was



nothing to ask for ; she was content to lie there, with Maria so near her, and so loving.

The sight of that pale face, the pressure of that wasted hand, reminded Maria that she must control herself if she would talk with Amy ; and so, now, making a great effort to speak with composure, she said :

“ Amy, I’ve got something to tell you, and I don’t know how I shall ever get through with it.”

“ Don’t you ?” said Amy, “ then wait till some other time, Maria.”

“ No ; now or never !” answered Maria, speaking up with decision. “ Oh, Amy, when I heard you talking about the picture, and your dream, I thought there was no danger that you would ever be shipwrecked ; but I, *I’m* out in the storm, and though I do see the Rock, if I don’t tell you everything now . . . the waves run so high!—”

Her voice broke—she hid her face in the bed-clothes, and it was indeed a storm that shook poor Maria’s soul.

Above its roar was heard dear Amy’s voice, whispering softly :



"Those waves could never break over the Rock, though they might hide it from your eyes awhile, Maria.

"But not forever—not forever!"

"All in a moment you might find your feet were set firm on the Rock itself. It is such an easy thing for Christ to work miracles."

"Oh, then, it would be a miracle to find myself under that tower. It's the only safe place in the ocean, and I know it—Amy, I know it—and I want to be there!"

"Maria, then you shall be! He will not leave you comfortless. He will come to you; he came to Peter when he was drowning; He saved him!" How strong the voice of Amy sounded now. Well might it. It was strong with the strength of him who leans on the staff and is comforted, while he goes through the dark valley; the strength of him who drinks of the living fountain in the desert, and is saved from perishing; the strength of him who, wounded nigh to death, looks up at the brazen serpent and is alive again. The valiant and conquering strength of him, who, beset by



legions of foes, standing alone and defenceless, looks down on his tormentors and exclaims :

“I will say of the Lord, HE is my fortress, my defence, and my high tower !”

“I was going to tell you something,” began Maria again, speaking now more quietly, as if nothing should hinder her from telling the tale through to the end, “about that money you lost, Amy ! Did you think that I knew anything more about it than I seemed to ?”

“You, dear Maria ? No.”

“I did, Amy.”

“Did you, Maria ? Oh—yes—you discovered it in some way ; that is not so very strange.”

“Discovered it ! I should think so. But, believe me, Amy, at first I only borrowed it, and I expected you would know it right away. I was going to tell you as soon as you came home—it was while I had the influenza—but something happened that I couldn’t—and then I thought, never mind—I would scare you a little ; besides, I was ashamed, for I borrowed the money of Stephen to get grandfather’s



Christmas present, and I was so proud, I hated you should know it, and hated to be in debt, too. Then I got mad at him, and you, and everybody ; for he was looking at me as if I was a thief—and I wasn't much better—I don't suppose I was a bit better—not a single bit—oh, Amy Carr, if you only knew—”

Maria could not speak another word. She fell on her knees—she turned her face from Amy—she had told all, and now it seemed to her that she could never look in Amy's face again.

“ Dear Maria ! ” said Amy, at length, and she kissed the hand she held, and stroked Maria's head, and for a little while she said no more.

It grew so very still, so *awfully* silent, in the room, that at length Maria could endure it no longer, and she sprang to her feet. What if this story she had told had killed Amy ? for there Amy lay, with her eyes closed and pale indeed as death.

“ Amy ! ” she exclaimed, terrified. The call brought Amy back, not from unconsciousness, but from prayer ; she looked up at Maria and smiled ; she said, “ Kiss me, dear Maria.”



That word brought Maria to her knees again. "I shall never get up," she said, "never, from this place, till you tell me you forgive me. Do you, Amy? Do you Amy? such a wicked, shameless thing?"

What was Amy's answer? Was there not something really Christ-like in it?"

"Maria, I never seemed to love you half as much as I do now. Kiss me, dear Maria!"

And then Maria kissed her, and said,

"Oh, Amy, I have had my fortune told for me again!" And she sat down close by Amy's side.

"*Blessed are they that mourn,*" was Amy's answer, "*for they shall be comforted . . . Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*"

## XXIV.

THERE was a glad surprise in store for Stephen Rider the next time he came into the kitchen. He was now in the habit of coming twice or thrice every day to inquire after Amy, and whether there were any errands to be done.

Maria was the one to see him and give him the intelligence he wanted ; and we all know how she gave it ; we have heard people telling such good tidings to each other of the dear ones who have been given back to them from the borders of the grave.

Maria said, " The danger is all over, Stephen, she is getting better every hour. She has been asking about you, Stephen."

Stephen's face, which had looked very anxious and careworn until this moment, in spite of all that had been told him about the fever



being broken, now brightened to such a degree Maria knew how lightened his heart was. There was no time like the present, she saw, for telling him that she had been speaking to Amy about the missing bank note.

The report she gave amazed him. He made no concealment of his amazement.

"Why, Maria," said he, "did you really go and tell her?" and he spoke with so much doubt that Maria's face grew red.

"I did," she answered, trying to check the anger and pride she felt. "Time, wasn't it, Stephen? High time, I should think."

"Time enough, maybe. But all things don't get done in time," said he.

"It wouldn't have been very wise to put this off to eternity," said she.

"That's so, . . . it wouldn't. . . . But Maria!" he looked at her with serious wonder, "I really didn't see how you were going to get out of it. When you paid me the money I thought that was the end of the business."

Maria's impulse when he said this was to turn about and go away. But as she looked



at Stephen's honest, earnest, friendly face, another feeling arose to prevent that. And she said,

"I never should, Steph, never, if I hadn't been out in such a storm . . . and got nearly shipwrecked—and found there was the Rock of Ages for Salvation! There's *my* fortune told!"

She had made her confession! She had given to God the glory of her deliverance. What now did he say in reply to it?

"Maria, I know what that means. We're all 'out on the ocean sailing,' bound for 'the Rock that is higher' than the storms can blow. And we don't want any old impostors to prophesy their lies to us. We've got God's Word for it that the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom; and, if we commit our way to Him, He will bring it to pass."

"Stephen, you *did* mean that time that you'd taken the Bible for your fortune-teller, didn't you? I know you did."

"Yes!" he answered. And the boy's head lifted, when he spoke, with a noble courage,



and a strange look, that was grander than any "high look," you ever saw, of pride. "Yes! I don't care who knows it now. I kept that to myself for a good while. But when I found out that He wanted me to work in the field, *His* field you know, I just stepped along into it. I said to myself, If Amy could be spared to Mr. Herbert, I'd come out and make my stand. But as I was saying that to myself pretty often, it came into my head one day, what right had I to be making my terms with the Almighty! He was the one to make them with me. Amy belonged to Him, and He had a right to do anything with her He chose. But as for me, I hadn't a right to do anything but obey Him. So I spoke to the old gentleman, that's my friend, Mr. Spingler, and he said I was right; so I've come out and took my stand. And they read my name in the church last Sunday; and I'm going to be a member."

So Stephen Rider made *his* confession.

And now what more is to be said? What need is there that you and I should follow any longer the fortunes of our friends?



They stand on the Rock of Ages. Each and every one of them.

Can anything really *harm* them? He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" said it to souls that looked to Him, as all these were looking to Him. Turning to each other they might ask, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?" The Eternal God was their refuge; and underneath them his everlasting arms.

But shall they never more know tribulation in this world? Yes, they shall have their trials: they know they must endure them as good soldiers; or how obtain the promises?

Amy and Maria must work for their bread; they must earn it through weariness. That is their allotment. But their Help, think of it! is in the name of the Lord.

If Stephen Rider should grow idle, and careless, and vicious, he would quickly find his way into the house of correction; nothing would prevent it; but he will *not* grow idle, or careless, or vicious. He has formed other habits; he has a zeal, and courage, and a noble ambi-



tion to satisfy, such as never yet brought man to poverty and shame.

Mr. Herbert, be he ever so patient and resigned, and prayerful, must remain a cripple to the last day of his life. A miracle alone could set him on his feet again. He does not hope for a miracle. Yet his hope is never at the low ebb we found it in the beginning of the days of which this story makes a record. He can join with Christians in their thankful hymns ; he can share with them in their works of prayer and praise. And so, "his days go on." But are you curious to know a little more about these "days"? And about the "plan" Mr. Spingler, all honor to his memory ! had formed for Stephen Rider ?

The plan for Stephen took Mr. Herbert also into consideration.

And if some day you cross the Park, and look into one of the windows on the north-east corner, perhaps you will see a man, not an old man either, though his hair is gray, who sits in a great chair that moves about on rollers ; he is busy selling books and papers there ; while

a young man behind the counter, the image of Stephen Rider, waits on the customers who throng the shop! There you shall see the working out of Mr. Spingler's "plan." And if you had the time to linger about there for an hour, you might learn to your perfect satisfaction whether these partners in business get on happily together.



THE MISSIONARY'S

CHRISTMAS-BOX.





## THE

### Missionary's Christmas Box.

“LIZZIE, don't you think it's tiresome, being disciplined all the while so? I do.”

This question was asked in an undertone, and intended for Lizzie's ear alone. But, though she stood so close behind her brother she could not possibly have failed to hear him, she made no answer, but continued merely to gaze through the window. Was she really looking at the woods, or did her thoughts fall short of the great forest, and the world that lay beyond it? was she recalling how last summer the little garden blossomed and bore fruit abundantly, and longing for the return of spring? She was thinking of things that at least she would not speak of. You see how blue and bright her eyes are—they are very

far-seeing, even piercing eyes ; you would not hope to deceive her—you would not like to encounter her displeasure—yet they are tender eyes. She is a brave girl, who will sooner give than ask for quarter in the battle of life.

“I wish,” said Charley, who had not acquired his sister’s wisdom of silence, “I wish, do you hear? that I’d been born a reg’lar Indian pony. Not papa’s, though, for that’s got to be about as poor as we are. But a reg’lar-built, strong one, I mean. Like what pony was before he had the bad luck to fall into the hands of a missionary. . . . I tell you what, Lizzie, I’d make good use of my wind while it lasted.”

“Then you’d get blown, and have to stop somewhere. Most likely just where the pasture was poorest. Unless horses fare differently from other folks. I’d like to be a bird, and go, I don’t know how many thousands of miles away from this!”

But when she had spoken thus, the girl looked quickly around her, as if fearful that somebody beside Charley had heard her foolish



wish. She deserved to be rebuked, and she knew it,—that was the secret of the great heat into which she was suddenly thrown. Never doubt that she was heartily ashamed of the weakness betrayed by her exclamation, and vexed by the manner in which her brother caught at the token.

“Then you’d be sure to get shot about the time you’d like to stop and build a nest,” said he laughing.

She answered as if she would not easily forgive herself :

“If I should really and truly go away to school, though I don’t believe it will ever come to pass, and I should hope it wouldn’t, except for mamma, she is so anxious about it, I’ll write you a letter every single week. And if you were a pony you couldn’t read, you know. So don’t wish that again.”

“And if you were a bird you couldn’t write. So there we’re even, Lizzie.”

She smiled, but the smile passed away quickly, and her voice sunk almost to a whisper as she said,



"And we couldn't either of us wonder what Joe can be about, gone all this while! And to-morrow will be Christmas! Did you tell mamma what Mr. Nichols said? What *did* he say?"

"Why, I told you. He saw Joe swim out with his coat on his arm, and shouting to the lumbermen, when they went down the river on the raft. I know he has wanted to go to Clifton this great while. I wish I could go too."

"To that hateful, ugly little place! I don't! I wonder at Joe. I wonder that he didn't ask, or say something about it. But it was such a pleasant morning, I expect, and he thought there wouldn't be another very soon. True enough, there hasn't."

As Lizzie said this she looked at Charley with anxious, steady eyes. Other words than she spoke were on her lips, yet they had no sound. Other thoughts were in her heart than she dared to utter. She saw that the fears and suspicions which had lodged in her own heart found no place in his, and she forebore to utter them.



"Lizzie," said he, "tell me about that time when Santa Claus stopped at our house, and brought mamma the new dress and cap. Mercy! don't you wish he'd do it over again? What was the rest of it?"

"Oh, Charley, you know as well as I do. You've heard about it often enough. . . Those books for papa! And a new coat, and a hat, and shirts. Oh, I can't remember half. We thought we should never get at the bottom of the box—but we did."

"Do you suppose the folks are all dead that used to care about missionaries?"

"No."

"Why don't we ever get another box, then?"

"Because papa hasn't asked anybody for one, I suppose."

A long pause followed this conversation. Lizzie's thoughts went wandering again away off from this home in the wilderness, through secret paths, where Charley could not follow. At last—

"Lizzie."

"Well."



"Do you suppose a box would ever get to us now if it was started? Wouldn't the rebels get hold of it? If they did, and knew about us, we wouldn't be likely to see anything of it."

"I guess not."

"Oh, if Santa Claus should get killed in the war, how sorry—"

"Charley! what a silly boy you are."

Charley laughed, but he said,

"I wish somebody knew how much I want to see Santa Claus. Mamma has been telling me about the trees, Christmas trees, they used to have in the Sunday-school in Bytown—how they tied presents to the branches with everybody's name, and hung candles, all lighted, about—how splendid!"

"Yes—I know—beautiful, of course . . . But then . . . . How I do wish papa would come! Let's run up to the bridge and see if he isn't coming. It will be dark pretty soon."

But just then came a sharp, quick call for "Charley," from the yard, and forthwith the house door flew open, and out went the minis-



ter's wife, his son, and his daughter, every one of them crying, "What is it?"

A deep, grave voice, perfectly familiar to all of them, and most dear to every one of them, answered,

"The pony is stuck fast in the bridge. You must come and help him out. . . . Charley. . . . I'm afraid . . . has Joseph come back yet?"

"No; but we've heard of him—that he got onto the raft that was going down to Clifton. Mr. Nichols saw him."

It was the minister's wife who answered. Charley was running for his cap. Lizzie stood dumb.

The flood, she deemed, was rising to a height that would carry them all away.

What was that fear her father would not name to them? "I'm afraid," he began to say;—what was he afraid of?—He who never could be daunted by any trouble, or distress, or cruelty,—what was he afraid of? Why should he spare them? Could not they bear any evil that was put on him?

Only for a moment did Elizabeth Greenfield



stand thinking these thoughts. Then she went into the house and lighted a lantern, wrapped herself up in her old shawl, and followed her father and her brother.

"That's right, Lizzie," said her mother, and she went back into the house to prepare the supper her husband must surely need by this time. It was Christmas Eve—he should have the best his house afforded!

So she went about her work with eager hands, and a quick step—for she was a woman who always put the best face possible on every business she had charge of.

You may come into this house—this parsonage in the western wilderness—will it please you? You are welcome here. It is a log cabin, you perceive, consisting of two rooms and a loft. You ascend to the loft by a ladder. The window through which Lizzie and Charley were looking a little while ago, is one of the three of which the house can boast. Oh, if you could know at what a cost these windows were procured—how long the family waited for them—how they rejoiced over them when



at last they saw them fixed in their proper places! Then the door through which just now the missionary's wife and children passed, there's not another one beside it in the house! You could never guess the price that they had paid for that single door.

Well, but there are some treasures within here — some signs of comfort we see inside these walls. Yes, truly. The table on which the supper will be spread, was brought from Home. Other garniture it had in other days — and what different feasting! The bedstead likewise, and the cradle; these things were brought out of the Holy Land of Memory, from the dear old house in the pleasant village far away. Thence, also, came the clock, and the candlesticks, and the most precious portion of the books you see on the corner shelf. Likewise those little black-framed portraits of good men on the wall. They were wedding-gifts to the wife of Parson Greenfield.

The rest of the furniture needs no explanation. It has evidently been made by the missionary himself, to supply some urgent house-



hold want. Parson Greenfield boasts of his carpentry sometimes.

To this place, called St. Cloud, the missionary and his wife came when Joseph was three years old. Elizabeth was baptized in the old church of Bytown. On that most sacred day the mother saw around her kind and tender faces, familiar to her since she could remember; and they were faces on which she had never looked again since her daughter's christening; for the baptismal ceremony was performed on the last Sunday they were to spend at home—and since they came here to this distant mission ground, they had never retraced their steps. Through sickness, and poverty, and loneliness, the brave pair have struggled, and God has helped them, so that from year to year they have said, looking at each other, "One day this place will be a garden of the Lord. He helps us in His vineyard."

But this house, this very cabin to which I welcomed you, was Charley's birth-place—and here, also, little Grace was born and died. Her grave, on the edge of the woods near by,



is a mound of flowers, and her memory is sweet and fragrant as any bud that blooms there.

The cabin is covered with vines, woodbine, green the summer through, and glorious in its autumn scarlet,—enough to make one think of the burning bush, in October; and if anywhere on this earth one could stand expecting to hear the voice of God, it might surely be on the threshold of Parson Greenfield's home.

The Missionary's wife is no longer young. Her brown hair has more than one gray thread among its locks. She is not as strong as she was once, in the flesh; but sometimes it happens that as the flesh grows weak, the soul grows powerful. And thus it is with her. Parson Greenfield sometimes trembles when he sees how frail is the staff on which he leans. A brave man is he, but he has not the courage to look the fact in the face that by and by he may possibly be left alone with his children to do his missionary work. That is one of the few possible things that can make the good man tremble.

Ask her if she ever regrets having come into



the wilderness with this laborer to aid him in making straight a path for the blessed Lord. Oh, ye daughters of ease, you might well blush to hear her answer, and to see her answer; for by other ways than speech she will reply. Shall she count any hardship too heavy working for her Christ? Is she not crucified to the world for his sake? and the world to her for his dear sake? What if she gave up a pleasant home, for Him? He gave up Heaven for her! what if she has known sleepless nights? there's Gethsemane to set against them! or days of toil and care? what are they to intrude on the remembrance of his thirty years spent in the work of Redemption!

Yet, she has known many cares, many privations, many sorrows. Those whom the missionaries trusted most have served them worst, sometimes, have failed them, and deceived them. And what a struggle it has been, contriving, aye, through more than one dark year, to keep soul and body together, when the children, at least, at all cost, must be saved from freezing and from starvation! What a work to preach



the Gospel through all provocation, in their daily life, as well as in the pulpit!

The missionary and his wife had not labored in vain. There, on the hill-side in the village, stood the pastoral evidence. He had succeeded in building up a church. It had been built, it almost seemed, just inch by inch. But there it stood at last! there, on the summit of the slope, their joy, their pride; and if Mr. Greenfield and his wife must depart out of this world, leaving no other evidence of their long work than this, was it not enough to have lived and died for, the building of a temple for the Lord? They thought so.

God knew what precious ornaments they would fain have brought into his courts. What a bell they would have set swinging in the little tower; how, in place of the rude benches, they would have provided better seats for the congregation; but they knew his gracious way of accepting the gifts of men—according to what a man hath, according to what a man can do, the Master expects of him.

While Mrs. Greenfield was busying herself,



bringing preparations for supper towards such a state of completion as made her look with anxiety for the return of the family, Lizzie came running in for linament and bandages for the pony's leg.

With these she hurried away again to the shed-like enclosure where the cow and pony lodged.

Presently she came back, all aglow, yet her helpful hands were busy about the fireplace before she spoke ; at last her mother said,

“ Well, Lizzie ? ”

“ Papa thinks, after all, it isn't such a very bad sprain. But—poor Zip can hardly walk, they had almost to carry him. He will have to be shot, if the leg is—I mean he would have had to be if the leg was regularly broken. . . . Charley cried all the way. . . . We couldn't help it, though. . . . It was a good thing I had the lantern. . . . Papa made me come in. . . . I wonder if he thinks I can't bear as much as Charley? Let me make a good strong cup of tea for him—he's had such a terrible time. . . . It's getting pretty low, isn't



it? . . . A teaspoon for papa, and one for the pot, and one for—”

“Not for me, child. Not to-night. I don’t feel the need of it. I’ll need it more some other time, perhaps,” said Mrs. Greenfield.

“That’s what you always say — but it’s Christmas Eve! why, mamma!” Lizzie carried her point by shutting the tea-box and her eyes at the same time, as if she would escape the vision of emptiness before her.

“Poor papa!” said the pastor’s wife, “what a blessing, Lizzie, that it didn’t happen further up the country—and night coming on!”

“Mamma, the *worst* thing never happened to you, did it?”

Lizzie, who had come close to her mother as she asked this question, clasped her arms around her waist, and waited, fully expecting, the answer that came.

“Never, my child. God always saves us from the worst.”

“Zip slipped in a hole between the logs. Papa said he thought he should know the place,



but it was so dark, and the snow almost blinded him this morning. Zip threw him. It was all done in a second. . . . Oh, I wish Joe would come home! Don't you think he will, to-night! It's Christmas Eve!"

How often she had said that to herself this day! over and over again had said it—Christmas Eve! as if the great festival season must have some good, if not some joy, in store for them also, as well as for all the rest of Christendom.

"If he doesn't," said her mother, "we must try—" but Mrs. Greenfield could not finish the sentence.

Lizzie understood her mother's thought, and replied hurriedly, "If papa had only gone the other way, he might have brought him. But I know—it wasn't to be, of course. We could go down, Charley and I could, by the river, if there wasn't so much ice in it. Oh, how I do hope Zip will be all right in the morning—but it would be curious, mamma, if he should be—everything goes so contrary with us. We have always something to worry about."



“Hush, child,” said her mother, “you don’t know what you are saying. Our right isn’t God’s right always. Let us choose what He chooses. Let Him rule.” Oftener than Lizzie had said to herself “this is Christmas Eve,” her mother had said to herself “Let Him rule,” but as often as she said it how she had also prayed for her absent son! that he might be delivered from temptations, and from snares, and brought back to his father’s house again, a penitent, if he had been a prodigal.

And now there came at last a sound of voices, and the stamping of feet outside, and the pastor and Charley entered, both of them more cheerful than we might have expected, but they both are hoping the best for the pony. And what is it Parson Greenfield is always saying? “Let us serve God with a cheerful countenance, and a thankful heart. Does He not know us altogether? Is He not our Father?”

Parson Greenfield is somewhere between forty and fifty years of age. There are gray hairs, plenty of them, on his forehead. Plenty of wrinkles too, about his eyes, and how hard



and rough his hands are—how very coarse his garments, though they are his best! But oh, what a smile is on his lips, when now and then it comes out with some gracious word or kindly deed!—it gives his face, I think, the look that an angel's face might have.

And what is the good man doing here? You all know. Breaking up land where somebody shall some day reap great harvests. Cutting down forests where by and by the rose shall abundantly bloom. Talk to *him* of money! He is thinking of building churches! Hint at hard times, while you hold fast the luxuries you prize? He is thinking of weakness to be clothed, of hunger to be fed, of want, such as shall not merely leave a man a beggar on this earth—but shall send him palsied and poor into Heaven. *His* house, be sure, is not made with hands. His rest is in the heavens. Oh, the people, East, or West, may dole out their dollars to this man, but the Lord God has given him a mine richer than any of Navada, to work, whose treasure is all his.

Weather-beaten, scarred, baffled, poorly clad,



poorly fed, hungering and thirsting through his valiant labor, burdened now with wondering, if Zip's leg is really broken where he shall get another pony to aid him in his necessary journeys—having nothing, yet possessing all things—poor indeed, yet making many rich, boys and girls, you may wonder at, admire, reverence, love him, but—don't pity him!

He has come home now with a store of the very cheerfulness that seems to set all things aright, wherever he goes. They have talked over his hard, cold ride of the morning, the comfort he was able to give to the dying woman he was summoned to attend, but how much he has left untold, when he ends that story by saying that he thinks the poor old body will begin her New Year in eternity!

These words reminded Charley that before New Year's day could come, there must first be Christmas, and that this was Christmas Eve. So, fixing his bright eyes on his father, he wished him a "Merry Christmas."

The word brought sudden tears into Parson



Greenfield's eyes ; perhaps it was to hide them that he took Charley up in his arms, and said, " Well, then, we must have the Christmas feast."

So they gathered about the table, and asked God to bless his bounty and the New Year to them.

It was not a merry meal ; not like any Christmas feast, perhaps, that was ever called a feast. Why did not Joseph come home ? That was the question both father and mother were asking in their hearts over and over again, and neither of them could find words to express their fear about the lad. Neither of them, without sharpest pain, could for a moment admit the thought that this boy had wearied of work and privation ; that he was dissatisfied with his home ; that he had gone to " try his fortune " among strangers, careless as to the anxiety and grief his absence should occasion.

He was their first-born, their strong staff, their beautiful rod ; all the hope, all the expectation their hearts cherished for the youth, what tongue but theirs could tell ? And neither



could theirs tell it. Thinking of him, their hearts not only grew heavy, but sadness came over their countenances, and the father and mother, looking upon each other, had no need to express their inmost hidden thought. But the parson still talked on. He was telling Charley of some famous Christmas eve he could remember, reading, as it were, out of his old experiences, a fairy tale to the boy ; for his childhood was spent in a city far away, and he could not mention any thing connected with those happy years but the child's eyes would open with wonder. He was telling a Christmas tale to Charley, I say, when suddenly there came a sound as of the trampling of heavy feet outside. They all started to their feet at that summons, for they seemed to hear a summons before they heard a voice. One hope and one fear was in every face.

"It's Joseph!" said Joseph's mother.

"*It's Joseph!*" said every one of them.

They were right. As if, indeed, his mother could be wrong at such a time!

After a moment, came a loud call for a light.



It was verily Joseph's voice that called. After days of wondering, of watching, and of prayer in his behalf, so the lad had come again to give his own report. Can you imagine how their hearts were beating, and what they were all thinking, when Lizzie threw open the door, and they looked to see his face for whom they had begun to sorrow almost as if they should see that face no more?

Parson Greenfield took up from the table the bowl of oil in which the rag wick was burning. You understand, this lamp was the best light the house afforded; it was not every evening that a lamp was lighted in the minister's house. But this was Christmas Eve! Shielding the flame from the draft, he carried the lamp in his great strong hand to the door.

What spectacle would reveal itself to him when he should look into the darkness? Did he fear to meet it?

Before anything could be seen, something was heard. A loud, hearty laugh from Joseph, then the young giant, panting for breath, stepped upon the threshold, covered with



snow, quite wrapped in a mantle of white, and said,

"I've come back, you see, from my travels, and brought my baggage with me ; it has cost me a precious little bit of trouble, I can tell you. But no matter, here we are !"

"Joseph, where in the world have you kept yourself, these three days ?" Such was the father's welcome. Now that the lad was back again, but one question presented itself to the father's mind, and this was asked with authority.

"Oh, I have been in Clifton, of course ; couldn't get any farther," answered Joseph, but it was very evident that he did not find it easy to use this kind of speech—no easier than it was for his father to hear it. After a moment's hesitation, he crossed the room to his mother, and said, looking with honest confidence into her dear face,

"Mamma, have you been looking for me long ?"

"Ever since you went away, my son," she answered ; then she kissed him.



"Day and night?" said he, for he knew it must be so.

"Day and night, Joseph."

If, as a prodigal, repenting, he had come, the manner in which his mother spoke would have broken his heart ; but he looked, with his clear, honest eyes full of love and devotion, upon her ; this was no prodigal.

"What could you think?" said he. "I haven't slept any more than you have, these three nights, for wondering. I was afraid"—

He paused there a moment, and his father, taking up Joseph's last word, said,

"And so were we afraid. Yes, Joseph, I'll own it, my son, your mother and I were afraid."

"Of me, mother? afraid of me?"

"For you," said the father ; "for what were you doing? why did you go away without any warning? How could we know?"

Joseph wiped the perspiration from his forehead, for though the night was very cold, his labor had been toilsome for the last half hour. It had taken him all that time to roll the great box that stood now just outside the door in











the darkness of the snow-storm, from the road where the wagoner had left it.

"You went to Clifton, Joseph?" said his mother, as if to encourage his speech.

"I did, mother;" the voice of the young fellow trembled as he made this answer. He was a brave hunter of wild beasts in the forests; he had endured almost every kind of hardship, and faced dangers you would shudder but to read of, but he trembled thinking of the fear his absence had occasioned his mother. "I expected to get back again that night," said he. "The boatmen sang out to me there was something for father down there, and I had no time to come back and tell you. I knew the river would freeze up, but I thought I should get the start of it. Well, I was mistaken, but I found the box down there."

"The Christmas Box!" cried Charley, who could no longer keep back this shout.

"I shouldn't wonder if it was a Christmas Box," said Joseph. "I did the best I could. When I found there wasn't another boat coming up, I was there, and I couldn't help myself,



only in one way. There was a lumberman down there said he'd bring it up for me, if I'd help him on his job, and I guess he never had a better hand. But I tell you I was worried, thinking how surprised you would be, and whether everything would go on straight here while I was away."

How could they ever have doubted that lad?

How *could* they ever have doubted him? Lizzie asked herself that question as she looked at her brother, and she blushed to think of the words she had spoken to Charley, complaining of poor Joe, who stood there before them making everything so plain and clear, and himself so disturbed with thinking that any one beside himself had been troubled by his absence.

"Nobody knows how long the boy has been fasting," said Parson Greenfield, breaking the silence that followed Joseph's explanation. It was not easy for the good man to speak—it would have been impossible for his wife to have broken the silence—but now she said, "Sit down in your place, my son, we will have your supper ready in a moment. Come, Lizzie!"



They had only a bit of pork and corn bread to place before him, but do you not suppose he ate of the meal with a better relish than the prodigal son could have brought to the feast of the fatted calf that had been killed for him?

"And we shall have our Christmas Eve! our merry Christmas, after all!" said Joseph. "I declare, father, it made me fret to think, perhaps I should get here too late for it. I had hard work to get the man to carry out his bargain about bringing the box."

"Oh, the box!" exclaimed Charley, starting up from the corner where he had seated himself with the despairing thought, "They have all forgotten that it's Christmas Eve. And there we have a box in the yard that will get snowed out of sight, I guess, by morning!"

So at length they brought that treasure-house into the kitchen.

You know what kind of box it was. Perhaps you even helped to pack it!

And the house to which it came, you know. Do you think there was need of it there?

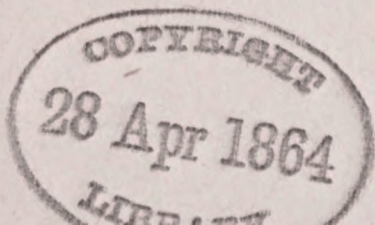
You know, or you can guess, what sight met



the eyes of the family—met the mother's thankful eyes—met the father's vision—how a cloud of darkness rolled away from their hearts, and relieved them of their fear and anxiety about the winter's cold; how the eyes of Charley shone, looking at the comfortable garments that went packed up in the box addressed to the *Rev. Eben Greenfield*.

God bless their hands and strengthen their hearts, who sent a year of comfort in this homely shape, to the far-off log cabin of a home missionary! And may every lad who reads this story be able to look into his mother's eyes on Christmas Eve, and every other eve, with as little shame and as much loving confidence, while rendering an account of deeds and stewardship, as Joseph Greenfield felt when he came back from Clifton.

And may every girl repent her discontent and harsh suspicion of another, as Lizzie repented; bringing forth in daily life fruits meet for repentance.















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